McCLURE'S

September THE MAGAZINE OF ROMANCE 25 Cents

The CAPTAIN HERSELF ~ *a Vivid Short Novel of the South Seas by* L. MORESBY

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Vol. 57

McCLURE'S

No. 3

THE MAGAZINE OF ROMANCE

Arthur McKeogh, *Editor*

September 1926

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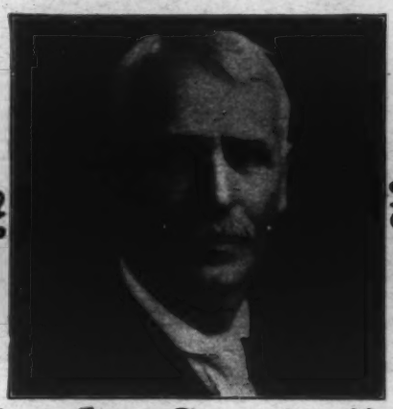
Above, Hotel Statler, Cleveland; at the left, the new Hotel Statler, Buffalo.



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"Author! Author!"

The Stories of Their First Stories—Three New Writers in This Issue

(Told by the Authors Themselves)

GORDON ARTHUR SMITH, whose story *He Married a Chorus Girl* appears in this issue of McCLURE's believes that writing is the one profession entered by a side door.

"I am convinced," says he, "that very few people writing today had the courage at the outset to announce to the world that they were about to take up literature as a vocation. Most of us have slipped into it by a side door, pretending meanwhile that we were lawyers or doctors or journalists or—even!—housewives."

Mr. Smith was an architect. His first story appeared when he was fifteen in BLACK CAT. His next story was written when he was studying in Paris and was published in SCRIBNER'S in 1912.

JOHN D. SWAIN, author of *The Lay of the Last Mitchell,* beats Mr. Smith by one year. Says he: "I sold my first story to THE YOUTH'S COMPANION at the age of fourteen. They paid me $18. and I have never been so rich since. I announced to my parents I was going to quit school and become an author; but they urged me to reconsider. In due time I qualified for the bar, but never practised. Instead went into business. As a business man I accumulated some handsome cups won in golf, tennis, boxing, etc., and it was during this phase that I sold my first *real* fiction. But it was not until 1914 that I left business flat and buried myself in the White Mountains from which wilderness I presently emerged with warts on my hands and a sheaf of manuscripts in my brief case."

©Ira L. Hill

LLEWELLYN HUGHES, former Canadian artillery officer, has written the best story of the big guns since the last shot was fired.

RAYNER SEELIG is not old enough in years to have followed many professions though her dreams have covered a wide range. "I was born twenty-two years ago," she says. "At sixteen I decided to be a painter. At seventeen I switched to sculpture. At nineteen I was busy on my first novel and I've been writing ever since." Her novel was "The Eternal Huntress," published in 1924. Her story in this issue is *A Marriage of Inconvenience.*

LLEWELLYN HUGHES is the author of *The Old Woman Is Jealous.* His first story was called "One Must Not Forget The Calendar" and was published in McLEAN'S MAGAZINE of Toronto. "I was intended for the profession of civil engineering by my father," he says, "but unfortunately was gripped by the literary germ and deserted the construction of bridges for the harder task of constructing fiction."

WALLACE IRWIN says he has always written for a living and done such things as lumber-jacking on the side. His first published work was a sonnet written during his sophomore year at Stanford and published in THE OVERLAND MONTHLY. "This bit of success made me so silly," confesses the author of *The Gas Man,* "that I imagined I had nothing to do but ask for a gilded editorial chair. A few years later I asked for the chair but got no farther." Irwin's first short story was called "Pelican Smith, Matador" and appeared in COSMOPOLITAN in 1904.

ROSE PELSWICK is a girl who knows a lot about motion picture stars. She tells how most of them dislike broadcasting over the radio in *For the Love of Mike.* Her first published work was a movie rhyme. She says she became interested in the movies during her last years in high school because she was fascinated with the way Elsie Ferguson did her hair!

HAZEL CHRISTIE MacDONALD sold her first story some two years ago to HEARTH AND HOME. It was called "Trifles" and Miss MacDonald insists it was original because it was about a man who was in love with a girl! Her story *Napoleon Wasn't the Only One,* appearing in this month's McCLURE'S, is about a man who tried *not* to be in love with a girl.

ROBERT McBLAIR, author of *The Other Unwritten Law,* says his first story was "a terrible thing entitled 'The Little Man In Black.' However it was bought for $20—which so surprised me that a good many years later I took up writing as a profession."

CLARA BELLE THOMPSON, the author of *I'm Kissing Your Hand,* first appeared in print in THE SATURDAY EVENING POST.

MARY LOUISE ANAWALT makes her debut in this issue of McCLURE'S. Her first story is called *And Ruth Said.* And McCLURE'S is proud to have her seated at its table of contents. She writes from an intimate knowledge of theatrical life. "The Rialto I have known and traversed is not bounded by Forty-second Street," she says. "It winds its devious way the length of this broad land . . . It is sometimes called Main Street."

BARBARA ALDRICH is another writer who sees the light of print in these pages. Her first story is *Cold Cream.* She is eager, incidentally, to become associated with a publishing house.

INEZ LOPEZ is the wife of Octavus Roy Cohen who, when he isn't turning out popular fiction himself, conducts a critique for writers known as "The Loafers" at Birmingham, Ala. It is safe to say that Mrs. Cohen sits in her husband's classes. She makes her first magazine appearance with *Cross Currents.*

MARY SINGER says: "My first published story was 'He Who Gets—Has.' Mr. John M. Siddall, all honor to his memory, accepted it for THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE after he had refused forty-four that had gone before it! How's that for perseverance? And patience on the part of editors? It came out in 1920, and I didn't *happen* to write it. It was deliberate scheming." Her present story is *No Fool, Elaine.*

HARVEY FERGUSSON, the author of *Hot Saturday,* has been more or less deliberate in his pursuit of a literary career. Says he: "My first published work was an account of a wild goose hunt. It was published in 1912 in a magazine called SPORTS AFIELD and I was rewarded with a check for three dollars. I have forgotten the title but I remember the magnificent full page illustration used, showing me as an elderly gentleman in a pith helmet with a dog as large as a Shetland pony."

L. MORESBY is the pseudonym of an exceedingly well known writer—so well known that it is not permissible even to hint at identity since the author of *The Captain Herself* insists that this name be kept wholly distinct from another signature that has graced the best seller list. Suffice it to say that L. Moresby is one of the most prolific as well as popular of contemporary novelists.

VALENTINE WILLIAMS is a London newspaper man. As a war correspondent he had many personal adventures in the Revolution in Portugal, the Balkan Wars and the Great War. During the latter he had a commission in the Irish Guards and was wounded in the battle of the Somme. It was while he was convalescing from his wounds that he wrote his first fiction, a novel called "The Man With The Club Foot." His story in this number is *The Continuity Girl.*

The Yesser

Verses by BERTON BRALEY

Drawing by ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

I'VE found that opinions distress 'em
So, when I step out with the men,
I've learned the best line is to "yes" 'em,
I've proved it again and again.

It doesn't seem ever to bore 'em
And so, with a wonder-struck face
And wide-open lamps I adore 'em
And "yes" 'em all over the place!

And that's why, just now, I'm possessing
Three different solitaire rings;
I've got in the habit of "yessing"
And this is the mix-up it brings.

I'm playing a game that's elusive—
Good grief, if they ever get hep!
Each man thinks his claim is exclusive
And that keeps me watching my step.

For Tom doesn't know about Harry
And neither one knows about Dick,
I couldn't decide which to marry
I'd figured on taking my pick.

BUT now I'm in love with another,
A life-guard—a college man, too,
I'll say that he looks good to mother
And *he* seems to think I will do.

So when you hear wedding bells jangle
You'll guess who the man is, no doubt,
I "yessed" myself into this tangle
And now I must "yes" myself out!

The Old Woman

The Saga of a British Eight-inch Gun and the Corporal Who Unwittingly Betrayed It

THERE was once a battery. It numbered six eight-inch guns, and three of them, D, E and F, were always up forward. They spat at half-second intervals, took fifteen seconds to reload, then spat again. By that method of firing were they known. It was crack! crack! crack!—then an interval of loading that never had to be timed by the lieutenant—and it was crack! crack! crack! again. Neighboring batteries cursed them by day and by night, for they drew the enemy fire as earth draws hail. But they admired them. For they were deadly. They blew the enemy sky-high. They hurled his ammunition columns off the crossroads and left shreds hanging from the tree stumps. They smashed opposing batteries to smithereens. The enemy used all its Intelligence Service to find them, and whenever he could locate them he turned a whole brigade of artillery on their position. But the eight-inchers spat in death as they spat in action. *They were a battery.*

On a September afternoon they lay, once more fully equipped and ready for action, in a tattered wood in front of Arras. F gun was now the eleventh progeny of her grandam. E gun, more distinguished, the seventh. D gun was the queen, the old woman. Battle-scarred, yet bore-glittering and deadly as ever, she had three and a half years service back of her. Some of her former officers and men slept under wooden crosses dotting the Western front from Ypres to Verdun; some, hollow-eyed and helpless, lay on hospital cots far across the Channel; others, ghosts of men, worked in billets where the sound of their guns could not reach them.

Of the original one hundred and fifty officers, N. C. O.'s, and men who came out with the battery in 1915, but one remained. He was a corporal. His name was Benalick. He had a bar to his D. C. M. and a pocketful of Military Medals. He had come out as corporal on D gun. He remained a corporal on D gun.

"For there ain't a boche shell with her number on it," he would say, "and so long as I'm her corporal there ain't one with mine."

That had been his excuse to many a bearer of promotion, his boast to a dozen of his gun crews. And now he had said it to the new lot that had just come out from England.

"Why don't we fire?" asked the pale youth from Manchester.

The corporal made no reply. He stood there, leaning on his gun. Past crews had debated whether he was more handsome with or without his gas-mask; they had imitated his laugh, a single staccato sound like the cough of a horse; they had made fun of—and feared—his hands, so big they could pick up a football as easily as an orange. But they learned to know his word was bond, and had loved him for his bravery. For his eyes were true and clean, steel-gray, like the barrel of his gun, and he was strong, straight, well-shouldered, and a soldier.

Six times he had gone on leave. Nobody welcomed him. Once—before the war, when he was fireman on a local train pulling out of Manchester—there had been a girl. She had golden hair and cheeks soft as the petals of a rose. She promised to marry him; but she wasn't born to keep her word. So when the corporal went on leave he hit for London. For the first three days he drank all the beer he could swallow. Women sat near him, whispered their eternal litany. He listened without hearing, looked on them without seeing. On the fourth day he wandered off. He went, not to music hall or theater, but to St. Paul's—to sing rather than to pray. He went, conscious of his ignorance, to concerts, art galleries. Then—back to France, to a ritual of slaughter that seemed unending.

Now the corporal looked at Gunner Skelly as though he hadn't heard him.

"Why don't we fire," the youth piped again.

"Well, I'll tell you," said the corporal. He liked this lad from Manchester; but not overmuch—they came and went, these gunners. "We're waiting. Waiting for something big. Waiting to pounce on Fritz and make him show the whites of his eyes. They'd give a lot to smash us first. It takes 'em about two days to range us. Then—it's hell. Until that hour, my lad, laugh and be merry. Savvy?"

The youth nodded. His face was set and drawn. He looked at his gun, muzzled fore and aft, dull-colored—green, yellow, black—snake-like. She was loaded and laid on her S. O. S. When not in action she was always ready for an S. O. S. from the front. A message by day, an arrangement of Very lights by night, meant that the particular bit of front line covered by these particular batteries needed immediate help. And "save our souls," when signaled by attacked infantrymen, would bring welcome shells from their covering artillery as a screen across No Man's Land three seconds after the infantry's Very lights startled the night.

"We've bin hearin' things," said Gunner Haslam. "Them Canadians," he jerked his steel-hatted head, "bin tellin' us. Alongside you, so they said, at Rocklincourt back of Vimy lawst Spring. They don't like us."

"Ha!" The corporal gave his horse laugh.

"You catched 'ell, didn't you?"

"We did, my hearty." The corporal didn't stir. "They bloody-well blasted E and F to bits. Blew 'em and their crews to the long, long leave. But the old woman here—she came through it." He grinned. "Stick by her, and you'll be

IS JEALOUS

By Llewellyn Hughes

Former Canadian Artillery Officer

just as safe as a louse in old von Hindenburg's shirt."

"Yes, I don't think!" said the No. 7. "I've heard that tale before."

Young Skelly of Manchester sat down a trifle wearily on a sand-bag. "I'd like to have gone into Arras," he said. "Maybe the chance won't come again."

"What d'you want in Arras?"

"Just to look round a bit. Have a drink of beer."

"The beer's no good," said the corporal. "But there's wine. Why didn't you speak to the Battery Sergeant-Major?"

"I did. So did Snubby, here. The passes were all given out."

Corporal Benalick had privileges he seldom used. But now he was thinking. These lads would shortly occupy hospital cots, if they didn't need strips of wood to make a cross. It was written on their lean and pallid faces.

"I'll take you into Arras," he said.

"Mean it?"

"Mean everything I say. Always have and always will. Meet me here at eight o'clock. And mum's the word."

The young lieutenant came around to see the corporal. They were alone in the gun-pit.

"Being new to the battery, Corporal," he said with an Oxford accent, "I'd like to know why we aren't firing."

"We're waiting, Mr. Grover. When we fire the enemy will use every means he can to find our exact position. Then they'll blow hell out of us. We're waiting, Mr. Grover. We won't fire afore the blooming push, whenever

"WHY you come here?" the French girl inquired. "Pears. Want some pears," he explained thickly.

The corporal bade them good-night, reminding them

that is." The corporal seemed totally unconcerned.

"Thanks, corporal. You've been with the battery since the start, haven't you?"

"And I'll be here at the finish. There ain't a shell with——"

ARRAS. Ghostly, mysterious, silent as the grave. The phantom of a town. Shadowy streets, woefully deserted. Dark, forlorn, untenanted houses; this one smashed, this one standing. Walk inside one. A table set for supper; a half-consumed piece of bread and butter, black with age. A run-down clock, pointing the hour of a long-departed day. A book lying open on the sofa. Walk up the creaking stairs. A bed, its covers tumbled. Pull out a dresser drawer. Ribbons, petticoats, a baby's cambric dress. Take what you will; anything, everything. Don't get caught. They'll put you up against a wall.

Arras. Arras with its grass-grown cobblestones, its desolate market-place. Arras with its broken cathedral on the hill from which it vainly sheltered its children's homes;

drunkenly they'd be on duty at seven in the morning.

a roofless temple, perforated with enormous holes, its nave a mound of stone and plaster; a cathedral risking further desecration by harboring an artillery observation post in its tottering belfry-tower; a miserable, weeping cathedral still there, precariously, despite all Germany. Arras with its nightly requiem of whining shell and drone of aeroplane.

"Follow me," said the corporal; "and let no man recognize his father."

Avoiding the guard by the southern gate they skirted the outlying cottages, went down a back lane, and moved along the old lichen wall of a once-imposing chateau. Through the trellised iron gate it could be seen—an impressive ruin. The town major hadn't bothered to inspect it even for purposes of storage. Pear trees, heavy with fruit, grew near the wall.

"I'll get me some of them," said the corporal, "on my return."

"I want some beer," said Gunner Skelly.

"I'd like for to see a girl," said Gunner Haslam, in a

"Here," he commanded. "Wrap this around my arm—where the blood's flowing."

phlegmatic manner. "I'd bloody well arsk for a kiss."

The corporal led them to the right, down past a chalk-pit, across a slag-dump, and into a street which stretched before them like a long, narrow vault. They walked the center of it, the clank of their boots volleying ahead of them.

"Let's go in one of the houses," said the lad from Manchester.

"Yes, we could pinch anything we wanted," said the other.

"I'll knock your blooming heads off," roared the corporal. "Keep a-going. If you're challenged start looking for your pass as if you didn't know where in hell you'd put it. Take off your ruddy boots and look in your socks."

"There's holes in mine," said Gunner Skelly.

"And in mine," said Gunner Haslam.

The town. Shadowy—and, all at once, swarming with the glow from cigarets. Canadians everywhere, moving about in the dark; talking, joking, laughing as though it were all part of a game. See them as they pass the smudge of discreetly lighted windows. Artillerymen, kilties, machine-gunners, lorry-drivers, stretcher-bearers, engineers. Men from Edmonton; men from Ottawa. Canada and her Maple Leaf! Overhead, under the stars, the threnody of wailing shells.

"Like a pack o' mongrels, them shells, with their tails between their legs," said Gunner Haslam, looking heavenward. The corporal gave a grunt that indicated assent.

"Gawd! if one of them things was to drop in this street," said Gunner Skelly.

"It won't," said the corporal. "Not if our heavies, back near St. Eloi, are sober. Them's our own little packages of death to Mr. Fritz and traveling twenty miles."

The gunners got their beer and threw it down the sink. They ordered wine; champagne at three francs fifty a bottle. They drank two quarts between them, while the corporal drank *vin rouge*. Then, with a bottle in each side pocket he started back to the battery, the gunners behind him. When he reached the edge of the town he bade them good night. They'd be on duty at seven in the morning, he drunkenly reminded them.

"Righto! Where goin', Corp?"

"Back to get them pears," said the corporal.

"Got a girl, I bet."

"Arsk 'er if she's got a sister?"

The corporal's reply was unintelligible; it went down the neck of an upturned, empty bottle.

It was softly dark. The stars, jewels encrusted in an inverted deep-blue bowl, and the bright disk of silver that was the moon, imparted a white light to the distorted surface of the earth.

Removing some stones in the lichen wall the corporal broke into an appropriate song:

By the shade of the ole apple tree,

Where the tum-ta-ra, tum-ta-ra tee,
Tiddlyom pom-pom-pay . . .

He slipped, lost his balance, and sat down rather hard on a brick.

"Too much of that red ink," said the corporal. "Better have some more." He jack-knifed part of the cork away, the rest he pushed into the bottle; and the fifth time he tilted it the second bottle was empty.

"Once more to the breach, dear friends," he quoted, addressing the wall. "This time, over the ruddy top wi' the bes' of luck." And he dropped heavily on the other side. But the pears were still denied him. He landed on the edge of a shell hole, pitched out of it, lurched forward, lost his steel hat, and struck his head against the tree trunk. The blood dripped down his forehead.

In the shade of the ole apple tree.
Where the blossoms they whisper to me,
With a heart that is true
I'll be wa-a-te-in' for . . .

His voice trailed away, and with the blood trickling down his nose the corporal slept the sleep of an inebriate, the moon witness to his comic posture, the pear tree confessional to his snores.

He dreamed of Manchester, of a girl with golden hair and cheeks soft as the petals of a rose. Quite clearly he saw her kneeling besides him, bathing—for some reason—his forehead. Only her voice had changed. She spoke with a foreign accent.

"Ah, you better now, eh? You knock your pore head. Too much wine for you, *n'est pas?* Your uniform—it is much with wine."

The corporal touched a dark patch on his tunic, found it wet and sticky. Strange! He turned his head. Outlined against a blue and slumberous sky were some towers, jagged, fantastic, sharply black.

"Dream," he muttered.

"*Non, non.* You knock your head. *Comme ça.*" Her little fist hit the tree trunk. "But now you better, eh? I was afraid for you. I bathe your head for long, long time."

"Wha'-for?"

She laughed, and the corporal would have protracted that part of the dream interminably.

"Why you come here?" she inquired.

"Pears. Want some pears." Pears! That was strange! And he said: "Wha'-*you*-doin'-here?"

"I live in the chateau. With my uncle."

"Um." The corporal stared ahead of him. "Tha's-funny. Pile-a-bricks. Tha's-all."

"We live in the cellar. My uncle—he *serviteur*. Le Baron Remy de Villiers and madame—they go—oh, long, long time ago. My uncle—he stay. I stay with heem."

"Tha's-so? Like-lil'-mouse. Lil'-mouse-in-hole."

Again she laughed. The corporal listened entranced.

"You *Anglais*—Engleesh—yes?"

"Damri'-I-am."

"Your uniform—he tell me so much. You fire beeg gun—yes?—pouf, pouf!"

"Pouf," added the corporal, feeling it incumbent on him to add the third one. "Fines'-battery-in-France," he hiccoughed.

"Me—also—I got uniform. *Le commissariat*—in Arras—he give it for me. I love Engleesh *soldat*. He is so kind—so brave."

"Tha's-so?"

"But I do not understand. My uncle he say to me only *les Canadiens* here; no Engleesh, he say."

"Tha's-ri'."

"But you—you are Engleesh."

"Tha's-ri'." Although the corporal's head was aching he was blissfully happy in the shadowy paradise of the night. "Mustn't-tell. Grea'-secret. Germans get hell, by-an'-by. Tha's-why-my-battery-come-here. See?"

Still dreaming, he stretched out a hand and stroked her hair. It was golden, soft and silky. "Tha's-strange," he muttered. "Wha's-your-name?"

"Yvonne, *m'sieur.*"

"Tha's-so? Mine's Ben. Shor'-for-Benalick. Savvy?"

"Ben."

"An' don't forget I'm D corporal. The ole woman. She's the mos' wonderful woman in France. The only sweetheart I've got. There ain't a German shell with her number——" The night, the orchard, the chateau faded.

When his dream became clarified again the girl's head was on his shoulder, and, miracle of miracles, she was suffering his arm to remain about her waist.

"But you must not say such things," she was telling him. "Because you don' mean them."

"Wha'-things?"

"What you 'ave tole me, *m'sieur*. Perhaps you married already. Eh?"

"Me? No—not married."

"You got sweetheart. In—England?"

"No-sush-luck."

"But just now you tell me you got sweetheart."

"Tha's-ri'. Down in the wood. Front of Rue-de-Bois. Tha's where she is. Mos' beautiful woman in the world. I love her, an' she loves me."

"Ah! I knew you 'ave not mean what you tole me."

"Wha'd-I-say?"

"That you love me."

"Tha's-ri'. I do." Her hair was brushing his cheek. The corporal lifted her chin. "Wha's to stop me giving you a kiss?" he asked in dreamy wonder.

She had no answer. She even seemed to sway toward him.

With the magical touch of her lips, soft, moist, and laden with inexhaustible sweetness, the corporal closed his eyes. Next, to his surprise, he found [*Continued on page 96*]

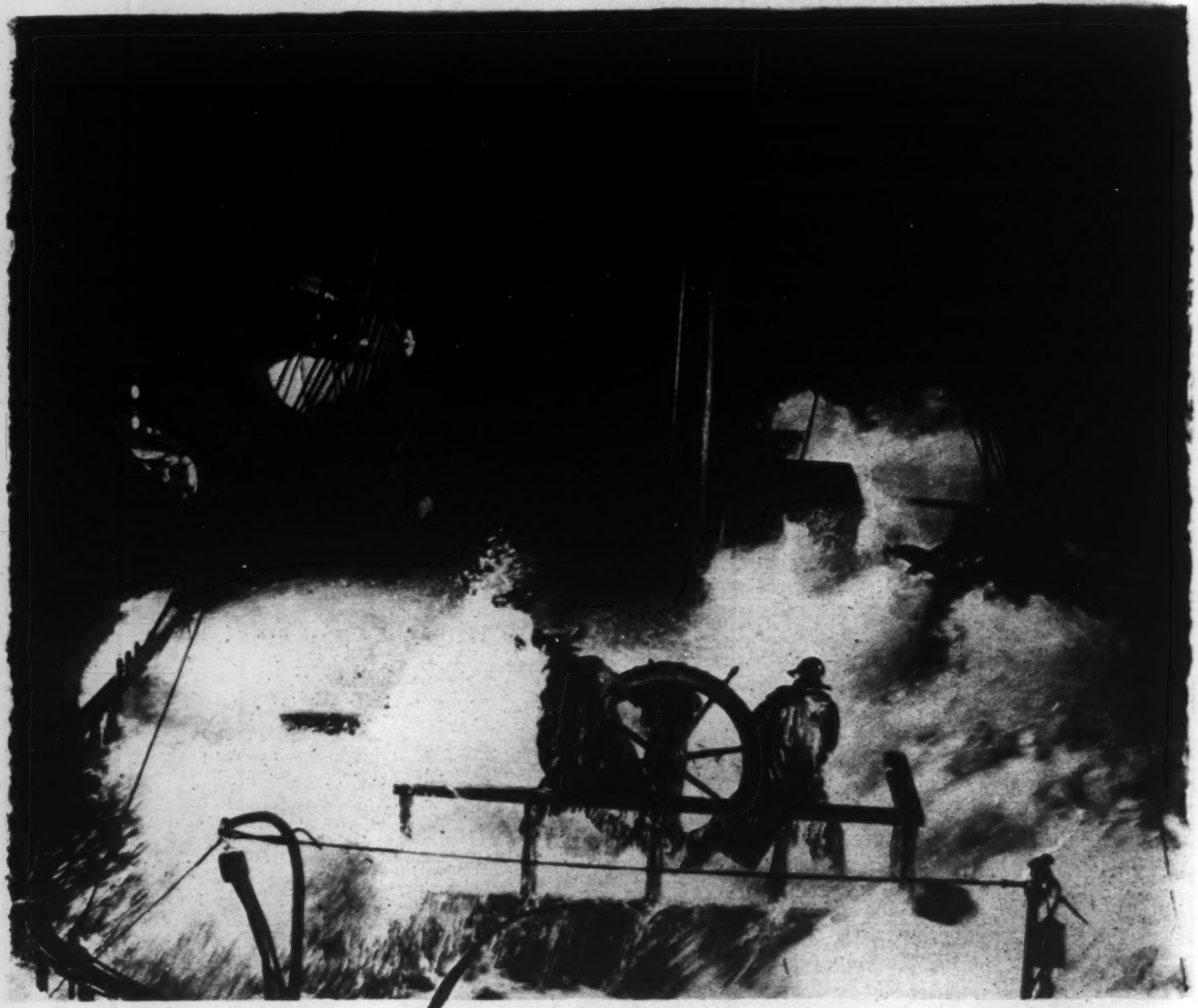
THE cruel hours chilled his legs, his fingers. But not his heart.

Drawing by C. Knight

By L. MORESBY

A Great Popular Novelist whose Real Name Cannot Be Revealed

A VIVID



"Too late we found the brig unfit to face the northwest monsoon."

The CAPTAIN *HERSELF*

CAPTAIN DIXON of the good ship *Soldac* had married as a very young man. With the illusions of youth thick upon him he had believed that life with Betsy would be one grand sweet song as a duet. It proved, however, to be a soprano solo to which he was the merest accompaniment. A sailor may have his sorrows, the lonely pillow, the unsolaced wakings, but there are mitigations in all earthly miseries and when he paced the deck, thinking of Betsy, he felt that the tropics were cool in comparison with his home atmosphere. There was no quarter of the earth which he did not prefer to Number 4, Paradise Place, Gravesend.

He was nearly fifty-eight when the time of retirement came along. He left the *Soldac* on a cold day in November, having received the compliments and thanks of the owners at parting. His heart was heavy within him as he pushed open the door of Number 4, drying his boots with a minute care that bespoke years of efficient training.

Mrs. Dixon sat by the fire, large, dark, and determined of jaw. She was enjoying her tea and had not waited for him. She never did.

"Shut that door, Dixon. The draught's enough to cut me in two. Well, what did the owners give you?"

Relaxing into his chair he unenthusiastically produced a telescope. She received it with scorn.

"Well! Of all the shabby mean things! And you that have been with them forty years, man and boy! I'd have thrown it at their heads if they'd served *me* such a trick.

SHORT NOVEL OF THE SOUTH SEAS

and of a Girl Who Captained Strange Adventures

But you haven't the spirit of a mouse. Never had! Here, come take your tea!"

He sat awhile silently drinking it and thinking how he could best slip out with the least offense. Mrs. Dixon carried on a running fire of remarks directed at the owners of the Blue Garter Line. Her husband was lost in meditation. He knew her opinions too well to need to listen.

"A telescope! It's as if they thought I was going to sea," he said in a ruminating voice. "Ah! I shall never use the sea again."

"Then what'll you do, may I ask? For I don't intend to have you cumbering the house all day. Not me!"

"Don't know. Take a barrel organ round and grind for coppers. I don't like it any more than you do."

"Well, I won't have it and so I tell you straight. A woman wants to be getting about her business. She don't want a man around to be always tumbling over. You just get a job or you'll hear of it."

Captain Dixon finished his tea in silence. He didn't want to be tumbled over. He loathed Paradise Place, and though he respected Mrs. Dixon's powers, he preferred to meditate on them in the tropics.

The tropics! He could see the far-off sunshine, the blue sea breaking like a kiss on the white and sparkling coral beach. He could see the palm-thatched huts, the voluptuousness of the swarming vegetation overhanging them; in short, he could see the island of Papalite, and he thought of it with a sickening yearning. Outside a dull, gray rain was falling. Gravesend was a muddy smudge, and Mrs. Dixon pervaded it like a thicker and damper fog.

No one could have suspected Herbert Dixon of romance with his weathered skin and nose illuminated, not by gin, but roaring gales and ardent suns. Romance might have turned up her own nose at his stubby figure, yet he longed for the beauty of Papalite with a lover's longing.

"If I could hear of any job—" he began cautiously. A dark and dreadful resolve was forming in his mind.

"You won't hear of anything you don't ask for, and you'd better lose no time. Now, do take yourself off. Can't you see I'm busy?"

He rose ponderously to his feet and looked out of the highly uninviting window. Where to go? There was only one place where the shouting of the captains could be reckoned on for company and that was The Ring o' Bells. To that resort Mrs. Dixon strongly objected. But he would just blow in and see if Captain Homan was there.

The streets were revolting, but The Ring o' Bells breathed light and warmth and beer. And the first person his eye fell on was Captain Homan, a stout elderly mariner with a round mild face, just now as expressionless as a bun.

"You here? Didn't think the missus 'd let you come, Dixon," Homan said.

"Never mind that. I was paid off and quit today. Man and boy I've been with the company forty year, and old Mr. Dowser he shook hands with me and he gave me a spy-glass."

"And what else?" the Captain asked relentlessly, cocking a mild blue eye at his friend.

"Don't you ask no questions, and you'll be told no lies."

"I don't need to ask, I don't! I bet he gave you a cool fifty down and a pension of a hundred pound per annum. And very comfortable too, with what you've put away private."

"For God's sake, Homan, don't tell. Don't breathe it to a living soul! You're a widower, but I'm not!"

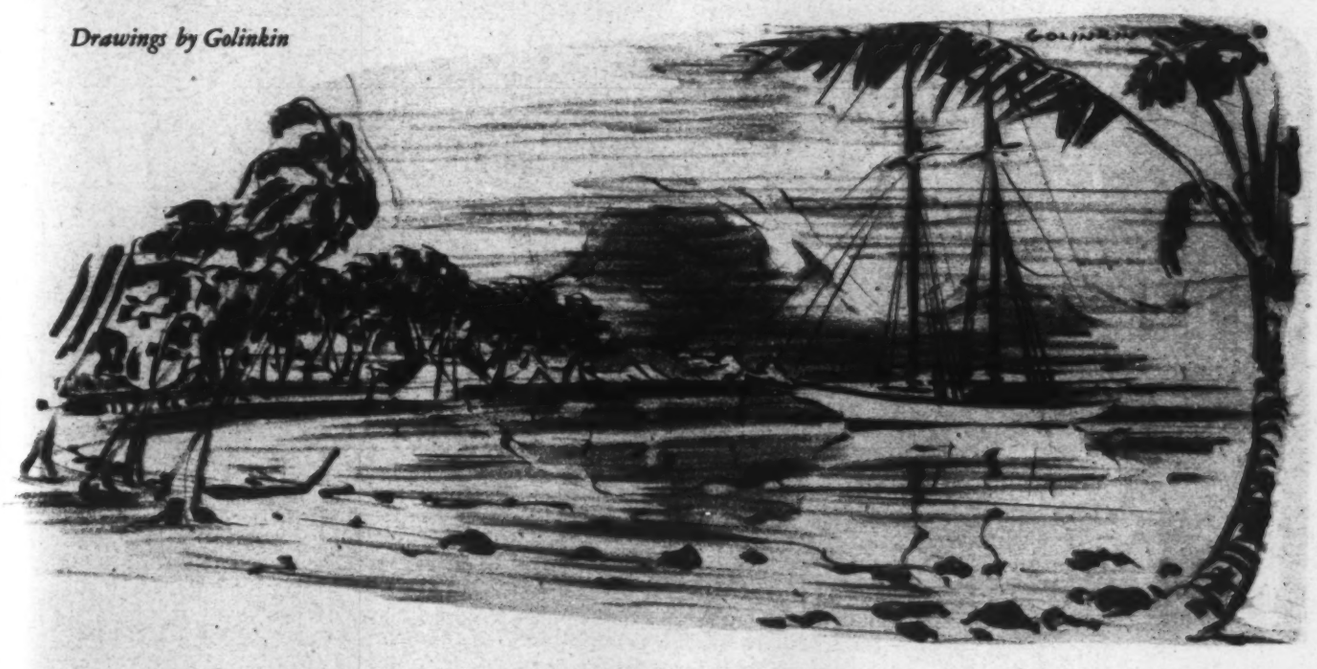
"Don't tell, says he!" rejoined the Captain with derision. "If I'm a widower I wasn't always. Is it likely? I know there's a heap of things women should know—and things they shouldn't."

Captain Dixon glowed approval. He was so far encouraged that he related his troubles to his friend—Mrs. Dixon's frosty welcome to the homing mariner, his future of tyranny and slavery, Paradise Place to the end of his days.

"There's times, Homan," he said with feeling, "when I'd be thankful if she'd take a fancy to some other chap and do a bolt. But she's a good woman. Such an idea would never cross her head."

"There's no escape that way then," said Captain Homan. They turned to the pair of tankards a waiter had set before them.

Drawings by Golinkin



A mighty island, ringed with coral, beautiful as the Garden of Eden.

Some minutes passed before they spoke again. Then:

"Homan, was you ever at Papalite?"

"Wasn't I! Ah, I believe you!" Captain Homan wagged his head slowly from side to side.

"Would you like to see it again if so be you could?"

"If so be as it didn't give me too much trouble. What's in the wind, Dixon?"

"Betsy's too good a woman to do a bolt, Homan, but I'm a bad man. Bad through and through. And the one that'll do that bolt is me! Will you come along? I'm for Papalite."

If he had hoped to galvanize Captain Homan into excitement he failed. Absconding husbands might have been a matter of daily experience with him. He turned and gazed at his friend with the calm introspection of a cow, and said nothing.

"I'm for Papalite and the sunshine and the best chawing tobacco I ever knew," Dixon continued. "I'll set down on that beach under the palms and I'll say every day to myself—'My boy, there's ten thousand mile betwixt you and the missus.' And I won't ask nothing more."

"No, Dixon. What a man of your time of life wants is comfort—square and solid. Now, if you could get any lady to go out as had been a cook in a gentleman's family . . . She'd be used to a warm climate and once you got her there she couldn't get away. Think it over, my lad. Papalite pigs roasted by a sure hand, and guava jelly to follow!" He smacked his lips. His friend shook his head.

"You go to thunder, Homan, you and your cooks. I'm afraid!"

"Who's afraid?" cried the mild Homan, fired by his own eloquence. "Why nowadays a man thinks no more of picking up a wife or two than he does of leaving 'em."

"She wouldn't like it," said Captain Dixon sadly. "She'd be a solitary woman."

"I'm not so sure of that. Mrs. D. don't seem to want you in her pocket now. And you'd leave her comfortable. No gentleman couldn't do otherwise."

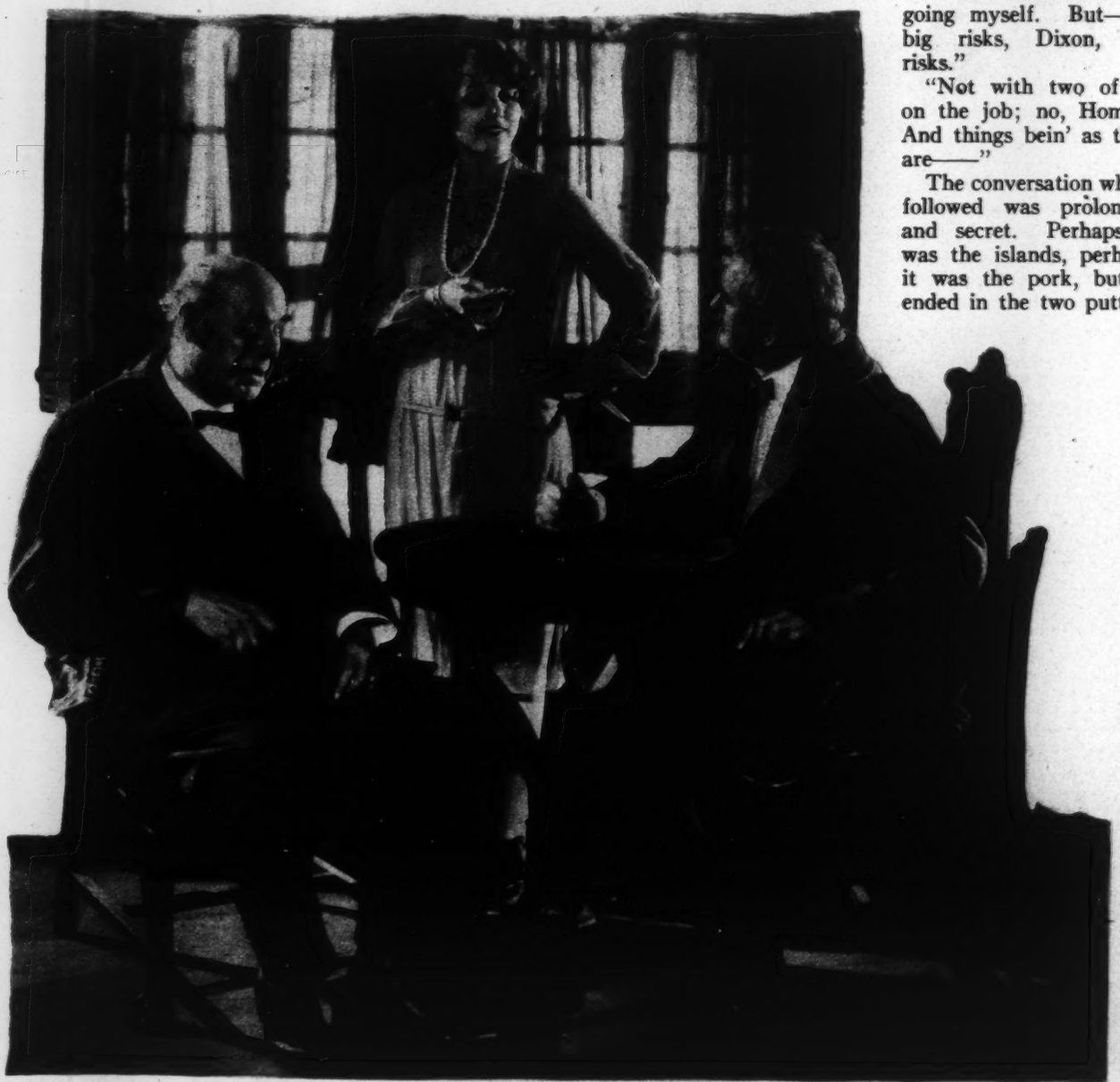
"Certainly I'd do that. But look ye here, Homan. If *you'd* round up the lady we could charter a clipping little schooner and run down to Papalite and along the Reef. And I don't need to tell *you* what pickings is to be made down there if a fellow has a nest-egg the size of a humming-bird's to start with. And we'd have a nice little humpy on one of the islands and your good lady to look after the pork and jelly, and——"

But Captain Homan interrupted.

"A man don't deserve to have lost his first what takes up with a second. No, a man's mother's his misfortune but his wife's his fault, and if I lay myself out to be dominoed over again like I was then . . . ! Still I won't say but what you've given me something to turn over, for I'm fair sick of shore-going myself. But—it's big risks, Dixon, big risks."

"Not with two of us on the job; no, Homan. And things bein' as they are——"

The conversation which followed was prolonged and secret. Perhaps it was the islands, perhaps it was the pork, but it ended in the two putting



SHE held out the lucky piece, laughing at their speechless astonishment. "It's Providence," ejaculated Captain Dixon at last.

their heads together and drawing up an advertisement for the Marriage Broker, a weekly gazette favorably known in shipping circles. When completed it ran as follows:

> Sea-faring gentleman, middle-aged, comfortable means, about to reside in lovely island in warm climate wishes to meet with lady of similar views and happy disposition agreeable to same. Must have private means. Good cook. Lovely provisions. Strictly honorable intentions. Apply Papalite, office of this paper.

"That's dandy. That will fetch her if anything will," said Captain Dixon admiringly. "Ah, you know 'em, Homan, you know 'em! That touch about the provisions—t'will make her lick her lips."

Two days later the replies began to come in. Evidently there were many ladies who wished to see the world. Captain Homan and his friend sat almost up to their necks in torn envelopes and ruthlessly destroyed sheets of promised happiness. Brunettes, blondes, all professed the same qualities, good looks, guileless dispositions, unruffled tempers, savings, and a passionate devotion to Captain Homan. But, weeded out, only one remained for serious consideration at last.

> Dear Sir:—Your advt. reveals a lonely heart which I think I could comfort. I would gladly be your companion to sunnier climes, and enclose photo. It seems queer to write about oneself but may say have an even temper and while liking everything comfortable nothing extravagant about me. Was the prop of an aged parent who was particular as to his meals, but now departed. First-rate cook and high principles. Refined appearance. As to means—wishing for a like confidence in return, my means are 120 pounds per annum partly in war loan, and a little house property at Erith. Am willing to meet in hopes it may be a mutual happiness. With a fond heart's love and everything strictly honorable.
>
> Yours ever,
>
> A WELL-WISHER.

They both liked this. It was to the point and suggested the sort of income that sounded likely. The house property in Erith could be sold before the start to Papalite and would fetch a pretty penny. It promised well. The photograph was more doubtful because there were so many that the room resembled a beauty competition, and Captain Homan had let it drop and would not swear he had picked up the right one, though he felt practically sure. It represented a comely woman of about forty with a widow's jet beads beneath a slightly double chin, a figure ample yet trim—a figure which, as Captain Dixon said, had evidently a good table behind it.

"That woman would have the right notion of boiling a 'am," he said, looking at it admiringly, "and them Papalite pigs they deserve good treatment. She'd give it 'em."

"But what sort of treatment would she give me, Dixon? That's what I'm thinking of. Give me your notions about her disposition."

"She'd be open to reason," said Captain Dixon, holding the photograph in a strong light for his best eye.

"If so, she'd be the only woman I ever knew that was. Are you sure, Dixon."

"Certain sure. She's the kind that if you chucked her under the chin you could do what you liked with her."

"But that isn't reason," objected the Captain.

The puri-puri man was planning to hold a magic festival.

"It's a woman's reason," answered the sage, and relapsed into silence.

Arrangements for the meeting were then made. Captain Dixon promised to support his friend on the occasion, as was but just, and recommended a Sabbath richness of attire.

The Wednesday appointed dawned in sunshine but Captain Dixon was far from happy. Writhing under the consciousness of guilt, a new pair of socks which his wife had knitted were like arrows in his bosom. It was a culprit soul that sought for his hat. He sighed as he gently closed the door: his innocent wife little knew the hair-raising adventure that her husband [*Continued on page 79*]

COLD CREAM

By BARBARA ALDRICH

THE plain-looking man never stopped humming. It drove her crazy. He hummed a tune one should dance to—and she must sit and sit in this drab office, shut away from the spring. Why, she should be dancing somewhere at tea, right now, in a beautiful dress. With Jerry, of course—Jerry, who could tell her softly how graceful she was, how Dresdenlike.

And this was the merry month of May! Nice things always had happened to her in other Mays. She had married Richard in May, David was born in May. Richard gave her the gray-green limousine in May. All gone now. Nothing left but to bang a typewriter, scratch with a pen from which ink ran over her fingers. "Copy this," the man would say. And her fingers would begin automatically, while her heart wondered if Davy's window was open enough at night.

The mornings weren't so bad in the office but the afternoons dragged forever. One o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock. It was prison. Four o'clock. Now she would get a drink from the bluish water-tank on the second floor. At four-thirty she would leave her desk again, wash her hands, comb her hair. Ten more minutes gone.

And how she hated her clothes! The same suit day after day. Its lines were still good, though. That was lucky. Hermann could surely cut suits. Strange that the lines of a suit—inanimate lines of an inanimate object—could have outworn love, devotion, home.

Five-thirty, at last. Slowly she went down the stairs.

"Going to eat at the Polly Prim tonight?" asked a girl. She shook her head. That cost fifty cents. She had forty. More than anything in the world she wanted a good dinner with music and soft lights and a waiter who knew her favorite dishes. Tonight she wanted artichoke, fish with queer sauce, a clear, cold ice, and opposite her some one to tell her she was beautiful and would never grow old.

Her face felt nasty. She'd had no cold cream for a week. There wasn't enough money to get any for another week. She felt that if she should smile her face would fold in creases. Some days in the office she made herself smile. If one didn't, lines came.

Without intention she found herself standing in front of a store window. Her face looked white even through her rouge. Her hat was bent. There was a line about her mouth that she hadn't seen there before. She lifted her hand to her cheek and patted it gently. Next year it would be worse and the year after . . .

A tide of misery crept up, engulfing her as she walked. It blinded her. Then out of the blackness Jerry's face came, mocking, alluring, boyish—and so gay. But it kindled no answering flame of gayety in her. Her feeling for Jerry was dead, but the memory of Jerry doing a lilting step to a jazz tune would never go.

Of course he liked her. Everybody had liked her. She loved to dance, drink, laugh, talk about nothing. So did Jerry. That was being happy. Richard never had learned to play, he was so busy at some meeting or other. It was Richard himself who told her to get her amusements with Jerry. Richard even asked him to stay at the house. Nothing wrong in that. Rather like a story—busy husband neglects lovely wife.

Richard had liked him as well as she had. And then later on, when he found her waiting for Jerry, wondering why Jerry was late, saying Jerry likes that dress, Jerry says this, Jerry wants that, he had turned against her—and with him the world.

She hadn't meant to do wrong. She hadn't done the kind of wrong Richard imagined.

She had tried to convince her husband that Jerry was just a looking-glass, telling her pretty things. He wouldn't believe her. Now in her sleep she would call to Richard at night, trying to explain. And when the anguish of her pleas woke her she would find herself whimpering aloud to the empty room.

There had been a last meeting between them, Jerry, Richard, and herself. At it, they had acted like unreasoning children, tearing at one another's hearts. People called it divorce. It was death.

"Jerry," she said aloud as she started away from the shop window, "you played safe all right. If you saw me now you'd be glad you dropped out. I don't look pretty any more."

She found herself walking down a familiar street, although she had sworn to herself not to. It pulled her like a puppet on a string—her old home with its brass knocker, its heavy curtains tight across the windows from which she had sometimes watched the people scurrying homeward at about this time—little black specks across the gardens. Behind those second-story windows she used to hold Davy in her lap and read to him—safe, warm, comfortable. Sitting pretty—that's what the girls in the office would call it.

Now she was a little black speck like those she had pitied. That was her old home she was passing, and she had thrown it away for a song—a little snatch of jazz. She couldn't go in if she were to crawl up the steps on hands and knees.

What a farce life could be . . . Was that some one coming whom she knew? Should she cross the street? No, she wouldn't be recognized now. She could hide her face beneath her hat. Her clothes were a disguise in themselves. Her shoes especially were horrid—and that run in her stocking was a hole by this time. She had never thought the day would come when a run could make her cry. She could still see her sheer gossamer stockings, row upon row of them in her bureau; they had such absurdly lovely names—moonlight, mauve, dusk.

She stopped to stare in another window, a drug store's. It was banked with great bunches of purple lilacs. Even in the street she seemed to smell their overpowering sweetness. In the center rose a huge, alabaster bowl, full, brimming over, heaped high with a pure white gleaming something. What could it be? She pressed her face against the glass. Oh, she knew. Cold cream. Fury seized her. She wanted to smash the window.

It was cruel. She needed just one little jar. She remembered a pale pink box that used to stand on her dressing-table. It was full of crystal jars—this cream smelling of violets, that one of arbutus, another of sharp, fresh lemon. Davy always used to say, "Mother, let me smell."

How dare they have such windows?

Where next? Might as well go to her room. The dirt of the office was ground into her very soul, and to cleanse

it there might be a little cold cream left around the edge of the jar.

As she opened the door of her lodging-house her heart felt a little lift with the thought that something might have turned up tonight. There might be something stuck in the hall mirror for her; a letter from Richard asking her to come back—a note from Bob saying he'd been a rotter—a formal announcement from a lawyer that she had inherited a fortune. Why not be ridiculous if she was bent on supposing . . . A fortune! Let's see, what would she buy first? She'd buy all the lotions in the world, the whole alabaster bowl of cold cream in that window. She'd buy crates of pale pink soap in fat round cakes. It wouldn't be so long then before her face would grow soft and lovely.

No, that wasn't right. She shook her head. She would buy David back first.

There were no notes in the mirror of course. On up the dark tunnel of stairs she went. Her room was in wild disorder. One pleasure was still hers—to leave things lying as she tossed them. She reached for the cold cream jar, ran her fingers far down into it. Not even a scrap. Oh, God in heaven!

Then she got angry. What difference did it make? She scrubbed her face fiercely with a broken piece of yellow soap. She combed her hair. It used to sparkle. Now it lay flat and somber. She hadn't even a clean collar. Better take off the soiled one and go without. Her neck rose fair against the black crêpe. She bent her hat at a different angle, so that it covered her face with shadows, and started for the door.

The first star was in the sky. She didn't believe much in the things of childhood any more, but she did believe in wishing on the first star. What should she wish for . . . Cold cream, to be sure. She laughed, but it was a laugh as empty as the jar on her dresser.

Where to eat? She wandered into a marble room filled with white-topped tables. A sandwich? No, she'd better order a thick soup. Soup was nourishing, wasn't it? She must eat nourishing food to live.

But why live? The idea gripped her. She gulped down a little soup amid the roar of dishes, and began to cry. Before she could govern herself a tear fell on the edge of the plate and trickled into the dark mixture. Her eyes were red as she went out, and the man at the desk said: "Who's been treating you rough, sweetie?"

Aimlessly she moved towards the gardens and sat down on a bench. Every night it got worse. When it should get unbearable she had a plan—if she only dared. There was a boat landing on the river near-by where one could step into the water easily. It would be simple enough if there weren't that step between.

Were things too bad tonight? It was a beautiful, warm night and the air smelt lovelier than rarest perfume. The flowers were just coming out in the gardens. Everybody had on new spring clothes. She would be ashamed when they found her in the water. Why, she should be dressed in sheer linen or silk. Instead her underclothes were rags. She hated people who wore horrid underclothes. She loved French, hand-made, filmy things. But—the idea rushed upon her — she wouldn't care then. Wouldn't that be wonderful—not to care how she looked.

Why not tonight as well as any other?

She couldn't seem to stop crying. She mustn't let a policeman see her crying. She tried to swerve her thoughts by looking at the gay tulips through her tears. There would be gardens in heaven more gorgeous than these.

A man came down the path. Although she did not know him, his name and wealth were bywords throughout the city. He was a connoisseur of the world's art—a man who loved beautiful women no less than he loved the beauty of sculpture and painting and music.

SHE loved to dance, drink, laugh, talk about nothing. That was being happy.

He saw a fragile girl with slender ankles, white hands hanging listless, a face like snow. She was beautiful, this girl, looking frightened from beneath a twisted hat, weary lines around her mouth, smudges beneath the eyes . . . beaten eyes.

He smiled into them and they smiled back. She hadn't meant to smile. Maybe she didn't look so unattractive after all. And he was a man of breeding—one could see that.

"I wish you'd stop crying and have dinner with me," said the man.

"There was something I was going to do——" she stammered.

"Can't you possibly put it off?"

A long silence . . . Finally:

"I will—if you'll buy me a jar of cold cream first, and let me fix my face. I've been crying so."

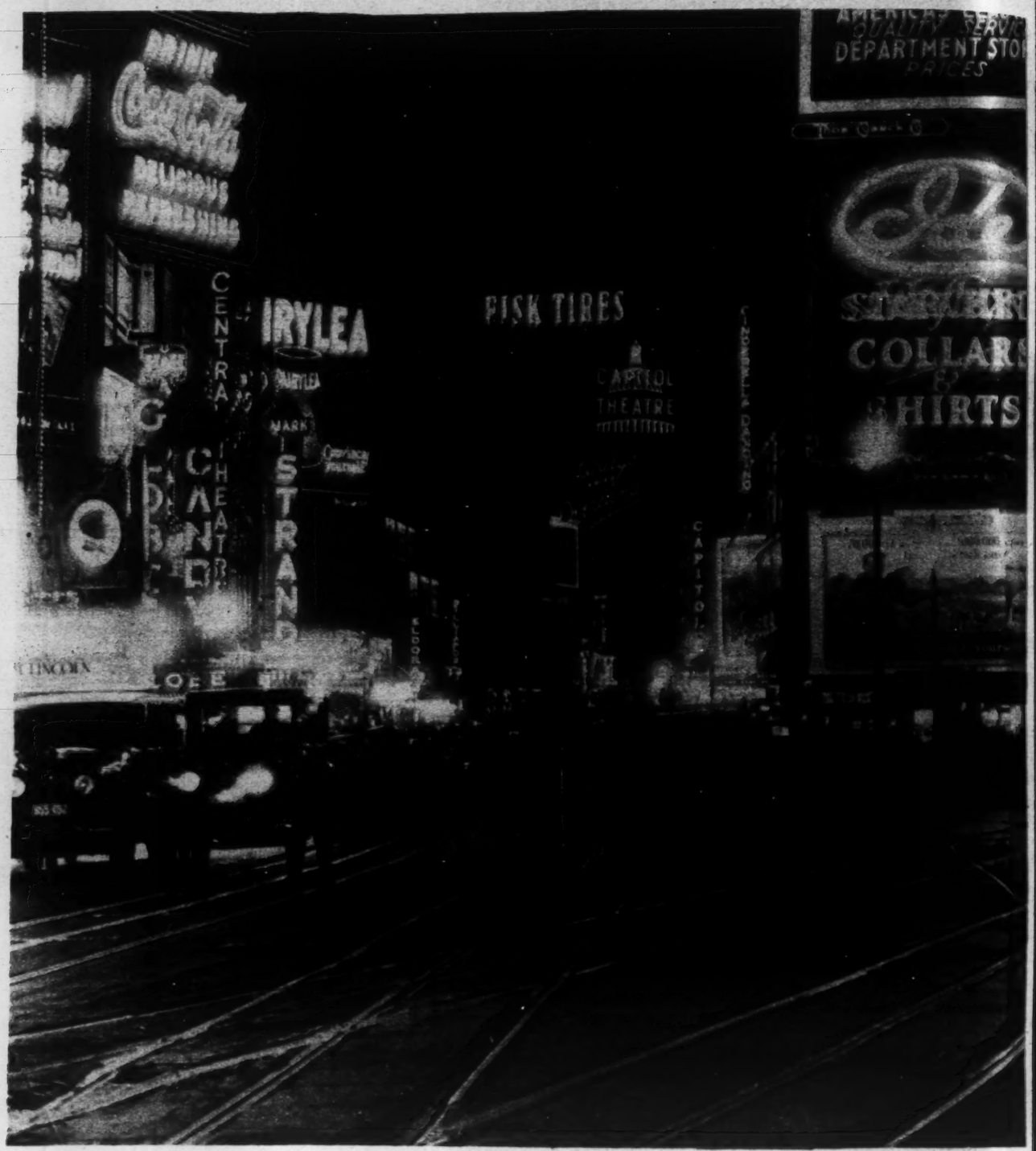
"I'll buy you cold cream and anything else you may want," said the man. "Please don't cry. I'll make you happy if cold cream will do it."

She might as well. Easier to than not. Cold cream. Anything she wanted in the world. Underclothes . . . She could put off what she had been planning a little longer. Then she'd look better. Anyway, if it were to be done it should be done on an unfriendly night when the wind was angry and the flowers were beaten down by the rain.

"I've got a run in my stocking, too."

The man laughed and said: "You've got beautiful eyes."

———



Crossing Broadway, Winona was arrested

He Married

A Family Skeleton is Not Always a Misfortune

MRS. ALBERICH VANDERLOON sat in an uncomfortable, carved chair that had been made in 1756. Mrs. Vanderloon had been made in 1856 and hence was exactly one hundred years younger than the chair. At the moment, however, she did not look it.

She held in a shaking hand a telegram at which she stared with angry, incredulous eyes. It was from her son, Peter, and it was brief and distressing—oh, eminently distressing. Yet it was quite brief and all it said was

WINONA WEST AND I MARRIED YESTERDAY AFTERNOON ARE VERY HAPPY TELEGRAPH YOUR BLESSINGS TO US CARE HILARITY THEATER, WILKESBARRE -

Mrs. Vanderloon's magnificent and expensive but for the most part artificial teeth came together with a snap; the nostrils of her thin, Bourbon nose quivered with in-

by two hands laid on her shoulders. Facing about, she confronted her father.

a CHORUS Girl

By GORDON ARTHUR SMITH

dignation. Very irate indeed was the old lady.

"Wilkesbarre!" she murmured half aloud. "And, pray, where is Wilkesbarre?" Then she turned fiercely on the other occupant of the room and said, this time very much aloud: "Alice, will you be so good as to tell me where is Wilkesbarre?"

Alice, a plump, timid woman, looked up from her needlepoint and replied in that cheerful, patient voice acquired only by paid companions and assistant rectors: "Wilkesbarre? Why, isn't that in—in Michigan somewhere?"

"Probably not," snapped Mrs. Vanderloon. "Very probably not. But it is of no consequence. Here, read this telegram and tell me what in the name of heaven I am to do."

The companion crossed the room hastily. Ever since

the second footman had brought in the telegram she had been burning with curiosity to ascertain its contents. Mrs. Vanderloon had made it only too apparent that its contents were catastrophic. When she had read it she emitted an anguished, "Oh!"

"Well," demanded Mrs. Vanderloon sharply, "is that all you have to say?"

"I really don't know what else to say," gasped Alice. "It's too terrible—too terrible!"

"Of course it's too terrible," Mrs. Vanderloon agreed, and fell into an indignant, brooding silence, her thin lips set grimly against her dentist's *chef-d'oeuvre*.

"Who," ventured Alice at length, "is this Winona West? She seems to be—er, connected with the stage."

"Connected! The woman's a common chorus girl. I have heard all about her."

"You have heard all about her, Mrs. Vanderloon?" questioned Alice, bewildered.

"I have made inquiries, my dear. This infatuation of Peter's is no recent affair. In fact it's been going on now for—well, let me see—for almost two years. Just because I chose to keep my mouth shut you needn't think that I was not informed of it. Moreover, I understand that Peter has made no secret of it. On the contrary it appears that he has flaunted the woman in the face of everybody. He has not conducted himself as a gentleman should in such an affair."

"Oh, dear!" said Alice with a deep sigh.

"Exactly," said Mrs. Vanderloon. "Oh, dear! But where does that get us? The girl, I tell you, is a hussy; and now my son sees fit to marry her. Well, he must see fit to give her up, that's all. The Vanderloons don't marry that sort of woman. I have buried two husbands, Alice, and I have seen many kinds of folly. But never before," she added venemously, "have I come into contact with the gutter."

The old lady paused, and a slight flush rose slowly in her carefully massaged cheeks. She had suddenly remembered that she was not telling quite the truth. Many years before, when she had been Mrs. Ormiston instead of Mrs. Vanderloon, she and Vance Ormiston had tucked away as best they could a skeleton into their family closet. It had been so long ago that the poor skeleton scarcely ever rattled any more; besides it had been very carefully stowed away—sent out to the vague West where men were said to become men. On a ranch, you know, for his health. That was how she and her husband had explained it to their friends. She had been quite broken up about it at the time, she remembered. He had been an attractive devil, that Dick Ormiston, younger brother of her husband—attractive, but unfortunately a rascal. Couldn't be trusted with anything—money, women, liquor, anything. How fortunate it was that she had had just enough sense, just enough foresight to marry Vance instead of him! Vance had proved so reliable, so utterly honest, so—she admitted it frankly—completely stupid. Yes, she had chosen well, remarkably well for a young girl in love with a younger and much more attractive man.

But for years after her marriage she had wondered wistfully if she might not have made something of Dick Ormiston had she married him; if she might not have saved him from the gutter into which he had so debonairly fallen. Poor Dick Ormiston! Poor skeleton in her cupboard that now so seldow rattled!

Mrs. Vanderloon roused herself from her meditations, glancing at Alice a little guiltily.

"Well, Alice," she said, "your brain doesn't seem to be very fertile. Better turn it under and plant a new crop for next year."

"I was thinking," explained Alice.

"So was I. But I have arrived at a conclusion."

"What are you going to do?" Alice inquired in trepidation.

"I'm going to break the marriage up, of course. Oh, I don't know how—divorce, annulment, anything. That is what lawyers are for; old Mr. Bessemer will earn his salt for once. And meanwhile I intend sending my son a telegram that will open his eyes, and if I'm not mistaken bring him back here from—what's that place?—Wilkesbarre?—well, from Wilkesbarre then, as fast as the Twentieth Century can travel. Alice, will you kindly get pencil and paper and take down what I tell you."

When Alice had equipped herself, the old lady began.

"I refuse," she dictated, "to recognize your marriage. You will return here at once alone or you will never return again, and my fortune will go to a cat hospital. This is a disgrace but I trust it is not irreparable."

She paused and rapped the ebony stick that she held sharply on the floor.

"There, Alice," she said, "now have somebody telephone Mr. Bessemer and tell him I desire to see him as soon as possible. And you might ask him where Wilkesbarre is, while you're about it. And before you go kindly hand me that new French novel and my smelling salts. I feel just a little upset."

WHEN young Peter Vanderloon received his mother's telegram at the Hilarity Theater, Wilkesbarre, he read it calmly and as calmly handed it over to his wife who was standing beside him at the stage entrance.

"The old war-horse," he observed not unkindly, "breathes fire from the nostrils. Don't be alarmed, Winona, she'll get over it. It's just mother's way, that's all."

"MOLLY," he said, "you're a cheap edition of Marie Antoinette, and in due time you'll get yours."

But Winona did get alarmed, or at least distressed. She handed the message back to her husband and laid a white-gloved hand appealingly on his arm.

"You've got to go, Peter," she said. "You're going to go, aren't you?"

"Go nothing," he proclaimed. "Or if I do it'll be with you. A trip to New York wouldn't be so bad," he added reflectively, "for a honeymoon. What say?"

"I say let's go back to the hotel and talk it over. It needs a lot of talking over, old dear."

Winona and Peter Vanderloon made about as pleasing a pair as one could imagine. She was one of those tall, slender, dark women with white skin and black, wet eyes. One could only guess at her age, but one would never have guessed it to be twenty-eight. Twenty-two, perhaps, or eighteen. Her gestures were youthful without being kittenish. Her voice was young without being babyish. She knew—rare and priceless gift—when not to talk.

Peter had a careless distinction about him. He had his mother's nose and the Vanderloon solidity and easy courtliness. He was polite without making a show of it.

They went out to the dark, snow-swept alleyway, and took a taxicab back to their hotel. Then they went to their room and each sat on a twin bed, facing each other.

"Well," said Peter, "what am I going to answer? Shall I be rude and truthful or polite and hypocritical?"

She pondered for a space with knit brows.

"I think," she said at length, "that there's no reason why you shouldn't be both polite and truthful."

"All right, my love, you tell me how it's done. You've got the bean in this family."

"Ass!" she said affectionately.

"Well, you have," he maintained. "Come to think of it," he mused, "it'd be a pity to have all mother's money go to a cat hospital. Loathsome beasts! But we've got plenty without it, so we needn't worry our heads on that score. I suppose it annoys mother a good deal to realize that we've plenty of money."

"I don't think so. I think she just put that in for emphasis. What annoys her is me."

"And what annoys me," said Peter, "is her."

"So that's that," observed Winona with an air of finality. "Now that being that, we've got to do the best we can about it; and my suggestion is that you telegraph your mother something like this: 'Marriage recognized by everybody but you. Leaving for New York tomorrow. We both send love.' How would that do?"

Peter grinned. "That," he said, "would work her up to fever heat. I think it's splendid."

"It's polite, anyhow," she pointed out, "and it's truthful."

"I'll go down to the office and send it off at once," said Peter; "and while I'm about it I'll reserve a stateroom on the train tomorrow night. Satisfactory?"

"If it is to you, dear," she said seriously.

When he had gone Winona took from her hand-bag a slightly crumpled letter which she had found waiting for her that evening at the theater. She had read it hurriedly in the brief intervals between her stage numbers, and had not felt it would be politic to share its contents even with Peter. It was from her mother in Montana—such a patient slave, thought Winona, such a cheerful martyr! It was evident from the letter, however, that her mother in Montana possessed a dry wit that is not usual to either slaves or martyrs.

"God bless her old heart!" said Winona of her mother in Montana. Then she re-read the letter.

Dearest Win:

Once more I'm afraid I have bad news for you. It seems as if I never sent you anything but bad news, but when you get to be my age you'll know that life's made up of one parcel of bad news after another, and the postman is never slow about delivering those parcels, either.

"THE old war-horse," Peter observed not unkindly, "breathes fire from the nostrils."

Well, this time it's about your father, Win. Your father has gone away again—been gone now for nearly six days. As usual, like the hired girl, he didn't give any notice—just put his tooth-brush in his pocket and left. I know that he has money because he just sold the mare on the sly, and that means that there's nothing left between me and starvation but the mule. I'm sorry to say that the mule is pretty close to starvation, itself.

I learned from friends that this time he's going East. Going East to see his little daughter is what he told them, Win. So I'm writing to you to warn you to look out that he doesn't bother you, for the Lord knows when he's in one of his drinking spells he can bother a saint. As I say, he's got money enough in his pockets to get to New York, and I guess that once there he can find out where you are without much difficulty. He's a mighty shrewd man, as you know, when he takes the trouble to be. I often wish he wasn't.

So watch out for him, Win, and don't let him make a nuisance of himself and don't lend him any money. Buy him a ticket home, if you want, but don't give him cash. Thank you for the remittance, dear, which I got all right day before yesterday. And God bless you,

MOTHER.

Winona had a serious expression in her eyes as she put the letter back in the envelope and began to undress.

Two days later, at about three o'clock in the afternoon Mrs. Alberich Vanderloon [*Continued on page 92*]

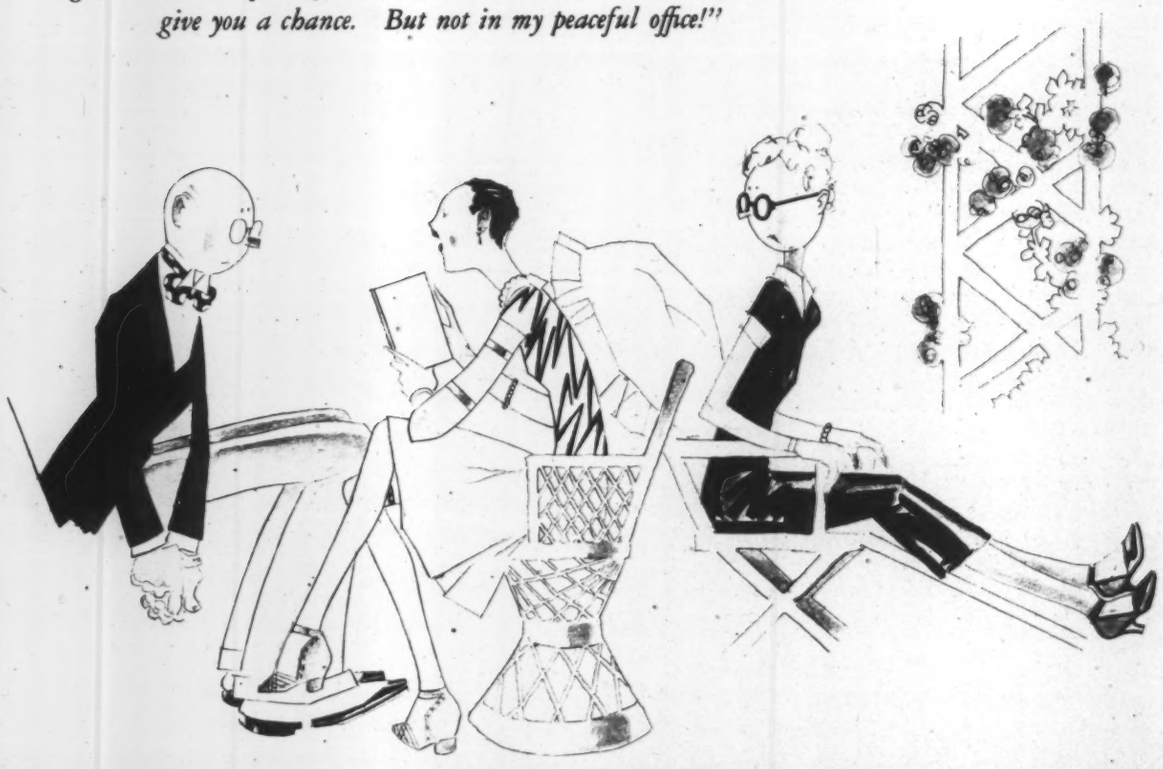
A BIRDIE in the HAND

¶Telephone operator, typist, lady of the chorus—that's been the history of Patsy McClure so far. But it isn't nearly far enough for that ambitious little modernist. Patsy is coyly blundering her way up to the stars by hitching her wagon—a 1926 water wagon—to any coat tails that offer good clutching.

¶Men come and go in her trustful young life as frequently as prohibition directors during a reform spell. First it was Freddie; but he was the boy-next-door, and consequently he burned no asphalt down her street.

¶Then the casting director and the producer of the theatrical company for which she worked each gave her a whirl. The director took her dancing, and the producer gave her two speeches from the chorus. She gummed the lines hopelessly, and as a result her two boy friends remodeled each other's faces. That brought Dad Drapelight, the Big Boss, into the angry picture. After all, his organization had to org.

1. *Dad Drapelight, the Big Boss, told Patsy that as a chorus girl she had caused more trouble to the square inch than a 3x6 bathtub. "I'm all for firing you," he said, noticing her perfect little ears, "but I got a heart as soft as your head—and no one will ever say I didn't give you a chance. But not in my peaceful office!"*

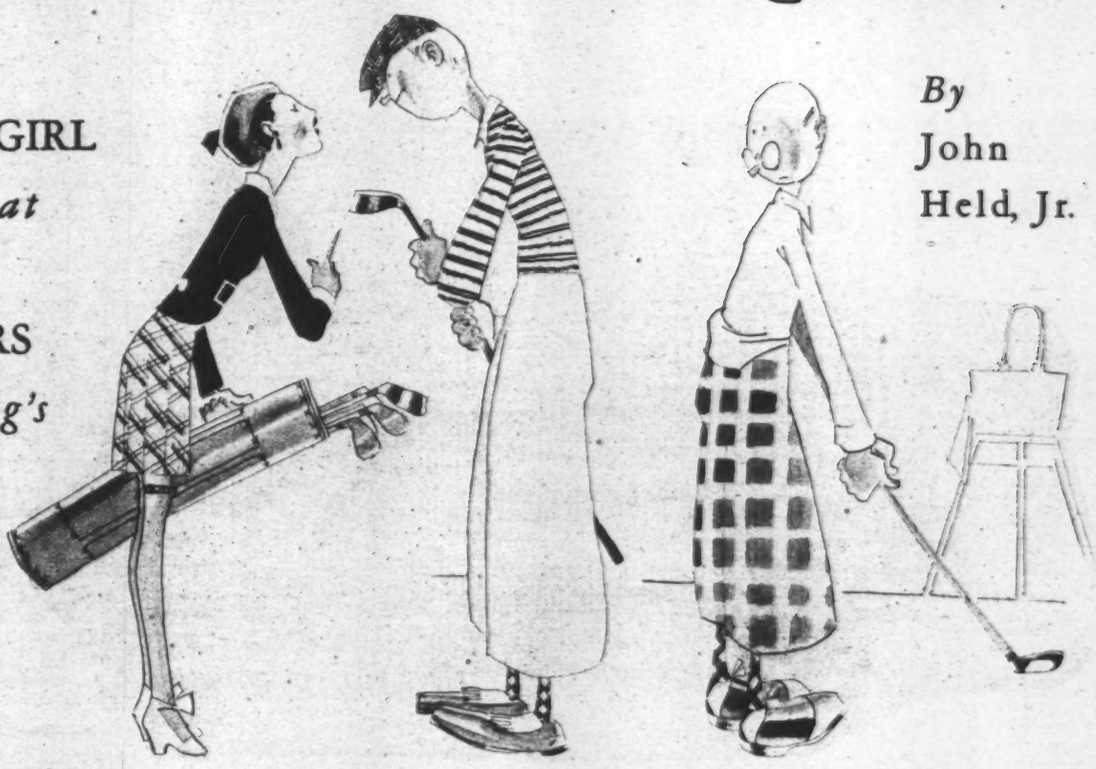


2. *It seems that Dad's wife—one of his early mistakes—needed a companion at their country place, although she didn't realize it until Patsy arrived—"to read to you, darling, and be sort of a little playmate." Patsy's education hadn't crashed the classics, but she knew how to cross her t's and her knees. And when she read, it was in the general direction of the Boss.*

Is Worth TWO in the ROUGH

THAT McCLURE GIRL *learns that among* GOLFERS *everything's fair in love and* KILTS

By John Held, Jr.



3. *When Dad went out for some golf at Wee Burn that Saturday, Patsy admitted that golf was one game she knew nothing about, and please couldn't she go as his caddy if she got all dressed up right? How could Dad know that Bill MacPherson Ryan, the club's professional, had a nostalgic weakness for kilts! . . . "So that's the end you kiss it with," said Patsy, examining a driver. And Dad's game went all to pieces on the first tee.*

(Patsy's Job as Companion is Good for Just About Another Month)

4. *The "pro" decided that Dad's form wasn't so good as some others he'd seen, and stuck along over half the course. Bill was illustrating for Patsy just how her hands ought to grip a club when Dad's ball lit on a bunker right above the "pro's" head! Patsy was saying, "And now tell me about a mashie," when Dad swung with his. Head and ball were so close that you can't blame a duffer for hitting at least one of them . . . Besides, the "pro" was insured.*

The Lay of the LAST Mitchell

By John D. Swain

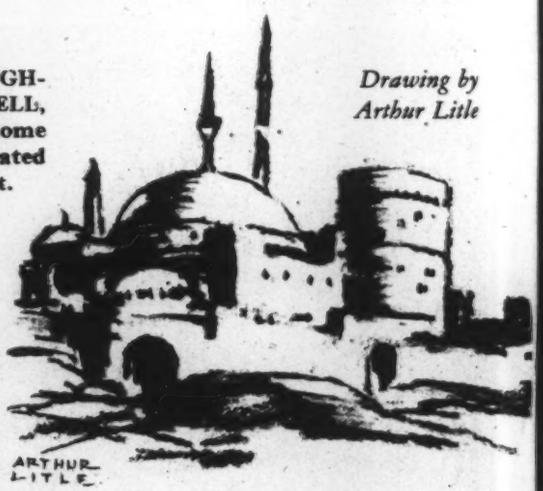
FROM the front door of the home for aged men Mr. Michael O'Shaughnessy Mitchell emerged with squared shoulders, and paused to sniff the earthy scents from the garden, which prophesied that spring was fast dethroning the winter of the old gentleman's discontent.

The last of a long-tailed tribe of Mitchells, which had numbered poets, politicians, and pugilists in its ranks, it was through no fault of his sobriety or industry that he had come finally to end his days in the ruinous old mansion kept by the Little Sisters for querulous octogenarians. The last of the Mitchells would have preferred to smoke his pipe in his own chimney-nook, surrounded by his children and grandchildren. But fate had willed otherwise, and Michael refused to mope about it.

As his frosty old blue eyes surveyed the miserable plot of ground that separated the home from the street, they took note of an early robin, observed that the lilac at the corner of the house had courageously put forth buds, that in a damp hollow beside the fence the grass was faintly green. All was well with the world. He began slowly to descend the half dozen wooden steps, disdaining to use the big blackthorn stick without which he never ventured forth.

How old he was nobody knew, least of all Michael himself. Back in Ireland there was doubtless a parish record, but there was left no one to take any interest in the date. He did know, however, that this particular March morning fell upon his birthday, and he was dressed scrupulously for the occasion. Upon his head sat firmly an ancient top hat, which had been polished against the rusty sleeve of his tight-buttoned frock coat so many times that most of the nap was worn away. The shine that it lacked, however, was made up for in his shoes, and a very large and clean white handkerchief showed from his tail pocket as he walked. But anything as effeminate as gloves he disdained, summer or winter. Thus an observer might have noted that two of the knuckles of his bony old fists had at

MICHAEL O'SHAUGHNESSY MITCHELL, standing before the home for aged men, meditated upon playing truant.



Drawing by Arthur Litle

An Old Son of Erin Slips a New Page of Glory into History

"I don't know why you crashed into this, old-timer," the director was saying

some remote epoch been driven out of plumb; and further scrutiny would have shown that his left ear was slightly thickened and belonged to the cauliflower type. Michael had never been one to look for trouble. But neither had he, during a long and sometimes strenuous life, ever taken any back talk from anything that walked on two legs!

In the institution he was a privileged character. The Little Sisters loved him, and he was usually tractable and gentle with them. He had the freedom of the roomy grounds and came and went at will, save that he had to be at table on time and in bed by ten o'clock, whether sleepy or no. But in common with all his fellow guests he was forbidden to go outside unaccompanied, because none of the inmates were regarded as safe in the crowded streets.

On this day the last of the Mitchells meditated playing truant. If a man still in his prime be not allowed to celebrate his own birthday to the extent of parading the city streets and doing a little window shopping, things had come to a pretty pass! Window shopping was all that he could do, anyway. He lacked nothing for his comfort; but of spending money there was none. The institution was not rich; it was a struggle to keep it going at all. And without really wanting to buy anything, old Michael often felt the lack of the comfortable jingle of one coin against another in his pants pocket. Nothing else could give a man such a feeling of independence!

He walked slowly but with little trace of feebleness down the flagged walk, pausing at the turn where it swept about a large elm to cast a furtive glance over his shoulder. None of the Little

CAMELS appeared, ridden by bronzed men wearing turbans and caftans.

As Michael projected himself into the thick of the fight, his voice rose

Sisters could he see, the windows showed no gleam of gray and white as one of them moved from room to room tidying up. He was unobserved.

At the gate he paused to fill his pipe. This was a rite almost religious in its attention to ritual. It was not to be hurried. The pipe itself was an aged cuddy clay as black and shiny as ebony. From a cloth bag he took half a plug of dark tobacco, almost as hard as wood. No shag, or twist, or fancy mixtures for a Mitchell! With an old jack-knife he shaved from the fragment of plug the tobacco, which he ground in the palm of his left hand. Then he knocked out the dottle from his cuddy; not all of it, but the charred top. He repacked it skilfully, leaving breathing spaces through the mass so that the pipe would draw freely. Finally he produced a card of old-fashioned brimstone matches, struck one on the seat of his frousers, cupped it in his hands, and lighted up. The faint scents of early spring were overborne by a thick cloud of pungent and highly comforting gray smoke.

With a final survey of the premises, he squared his shoulders and passed through the front gate, turning to close it softly that no warning click might attract attention. Then Michael O'Shaughnessy Mitchell was a free man, treading the streets of the town in which he had once cut no mean figure.

Eight years he had been an inmate. During this time nobody could say that he had failed. If anything, under the gentle care of the Little Sisters, he was stronger than

once: ***"Erin go bragh!"*** **Then he was too busy to waste breath on words.**

when, broken by the death of his last young one and by financial worries, he had been committed. It was his mind that had changed. Of late the Sisters had noticed that it wandered sometimes. He had lived through two potato famines in the old country; and now and then he would be detected smuggling a boiled potato from the table against a shortage of that invaluable tuber. Once or twice, lately, he had called a Sister by the name of a lost child of his, dead these many, many years; and twice he had imagined himself back in Ireland.

But these were casual lapses. The most recurrent illusion was pleasant and harmless. It was that the institution was his private estate, to which he had retired after making a fortune, and that the Little Sisters were his housemaids, cooks, and waitresses. But he was never offensive; he always spoke kindly to them, and usually increased their wages every month or so. His fellow inmates he regarded as uninvited guests who rather bored him, but whom, as a generous and considerate country gentleman, he could not bring himself to order out of the house.

On this March morning, however, his mind was as clear as his body was vigorous. He threaded his way skilfully amid the early morning shoppers, watched sagaciously his chance at the crossings, and got into no sort of trouble at all. From time to time he paused to explore the contents of some alluring show window, spelled out the posters on blank walls, or followed with [*Continued on page 99*]

By INEZ LOPEZ—*who, in private life, is Mrs. Octavus Roy Cohen*

CROSS CURRENTS

FROM the murky shadows of the dimly lighted deck the figure of a man emerged. He stooped solicitously over a slender form smuggled in the depths of a steamer chair and made futile pats at the heavy robe which shrouded it.

"Sure you aren't cold?" he questioned.

"Quite sure. I love it."

"The storm?"

"That, too, silly."

Just beyond the horizon jagged streaks of lightning showed briefly and wierdly through the high-flung spray. The *Ariantic* rolled restlessly, lashed by the relentless drive of her engines.

The man lighted a cigaret in the protection of his cupped hands and flipped the match over the rail. His actions were marked by careless indifference, that assurance born of self-satisfaction. And at the moment he was more than ordinarily pleased with himself, and the unfailing good fortune which had brought zest to a passage that had promised to be rather boresome.

The first morning on board he had been thrown unconventionally into conversation with Camellia Harris. There was a trifling mix-up in the baggage which, through the illness of her husband, had devolved rather perplexingly upon her, and which he had been able to untangle.

Camellia was not a person easily forgotten. She had smiled her gratitude from the depths of a pair of bewitching violet eyes, and from that moment the complexion of the trip had changed completely for Francis Covington.

Time had passed with amazing swiftness: days of lazy sunshine, nights of moonlight—the fascinating pastime of tempting fate and seeing it smile indulgently.

With the careless grace which marked all his movements he flung himself again into the chair beside her and placed an arm caressingly about her shoulders.

"Not afraid, honey?"

"Of the storm?"

"I don't mean that," he smiled. "You don't imagine that we haven't been missed inside, do you?"

"And who does it concern?"

"In most cases," he answered quietly, "it would concern the husband."

Camellia shrugged indifferently.

"Clinton has been asleep for hours. He was dreadfully ill before the storm. Now he wouldn't venture on deck if the ship were sinking."

"And you really think he is entirely ignorant of how much we've—been together?"

"Of course. Besides," she added petulantly, "what would you have me do? Make a recluse of myself because my husband has been ill?"

"I would have you do exactly as you have, my dear. The trip has been quite perfect, thanks to you." He raised her hand and touched it lightly with his lips. "I was just wondering," he added, "if I were married to a deucedly pretty girl——"

"And she were a splendid sailor——"

"No," he laughed, "not that. I'd never trust my wife on the water. I know its dangers to well."

With an exclamation of impatience Camellia moved restlessly. The trend that the conversation had taken did not please her, and his casual mention of other women gave their affair a transiency which hurt her pride.

"You frighten me when you talk like that," she pouted. "You make me an incident in your life, a detail of the trip—like the storm—and something that you will forget just as quickly."

"Foolish child. You know I won't forget you."

"I love you frightfully," she whispered.

"And I love you——"

"With reservations. You're so cautious, Francis. So premeditated. If you cared as I do you wouldn't worry about the future."

"If I love you," he answered stiffly, "I must try to protect you."

With a little shrug she allowed the remark to pass.

"Only two more days," she murmured, "and then—good-bye. Will you remember me?"

"You know that I will."

"It is so horribly definite. Two more days and I go out of your life just as though I had never been a part of it."

Without shifting the weight of her body from his arm she unclasped a hand-bag which lay in her lap and drew from it a tiny box. She touched the clasp.

A gleam of light shot forth, capturing the glow from the deck light behind them, and holding it dazzlingly before their eyes. At the man's involuntary exclamation she smiled contentedly.

From the bed of black velvet she lifted a ring. It was of platinum, carved into the twisting, writhing body of a serpent coiled to strike. In its fangs rested a ruby of perfect clarity, symbolizing a drop of blood.

"Good Lord!" he whispered. "Where did you get it?"

"I've had it for years, ever since I can remember. I love it. It's just what I want you to have from me."

He turned protestingly but she silenced him with a gesture and hurried on as though much depended upon his understanding.

"It is for myself, don't you see? I'm not a fool. I know that to you I have been just another woman. But it hasn't been like that with me. I—I can't bear to have this memory merge into the background with others. Take this with you, dear," she begged, slipping the ring upon his finger. "And promise me to wear it, always. On other nights like this it will make you remember—a woman who really loved you, Francis."

Francis Covington glanced from the glowing bauble upon his finger to the upturned face at his side. There was pathos in her plea—to give to the situation a significance which it did not possess.

"But, my dear girl," he protested. "I can't wear it here. If your husband should see it——"

"Always my husband," she retorted petulantly. "Clinton would never notice it—and if he did, wouldn't recognize it. It hasn't been out of the case for years."

Covington's hesitation had not been a matter of conscience but of discretion. He raised her head now from his shoulder and pressed his lips clingingly against hers.

"As you wish, dear heart."

WITH an effort Camellia opened her eyes and allowed consciousness to steal gradually upon her. The light that seeped faintly through the window of her stateroom

told her it was dreadfully early. Something had awakened her . . .

Then the cry, muffled and ominous, reached her ears.

"Man overboard!"

For the first time she noted a stifled confusion upon the deck—running feet, the scrape of a life-boat against the steel side of the ship. With an agile movement she was out of her berth and had slipped into a dressing-gown.

She and her husband occupied a suite on the promenade deck. She moved swiftly to the door which connected her bedroom with his, and threw it open. His room was empty.

She hurried into the corridor.

The white, eerie passageway was crowded with passengers in various stages of disarray. They talked nervously in the subdued tones that accompany the presence of death. She elbowed her way through and came eventually to the deck.

Heavy clouds delayed the coming of dawn and the lights of the ship mingled with the grayness of morning in a confusing blur.

The rail of the steamer was strung with people, their eyes glued to the spot where a life-boat had just been lowered to the turbulent waters.

Trembling she held to the rail, her eyes clinging in fascination to the struggling boat, appearing and disappearing in the rhythmic sweep of the search-light.

At the height of her panic a hand was laid gently upon her arm and a voice—quiet in the midst of the confused jumble—spoke reassuringly.

"Steady, old girl. You're all shot to pieces."

"Clinton!" She turned to face her husband. "You weren't in your room."

"No," he answered. "I hoped you would not wake."

"Who is it?"

"They don't know yet," he spoke casually. "Try to pull yourself together."

Unostentatiously a check of the passengers had been started. The tension grew unbearable; a woman broke unexpectedly into hysterical sobs; men strolled nervously up and down the deck. At first a young boy was reported missing, and his mother fainted before some one located him.

From a distance Camellia caught the echo of a name. *Covington!*

She put the idea from her scornfully. It was impossible. Francis! Yet even as she scoffed the voice of a steward caught her attention.

"It's Covington, I'm afraid. He can't be located anywhere. Traveling alone, wasn't he?"

The slender white planks of the deck jumped fantastically to meet her feet as she tried to move away from that voice. She must not faint. The scene became black before her eyes, but if she kept them shut tightly—just for a moment——

"Steady! Here's a chair. You'll be all right now."

Clinton had lifted her from her feet and placed her with her back to that merciless water. She must pull herself together . . .

"Sit quiet. I'll bring you something to drink."

In a moment he had returned and was leaning solicitously over her. His arm slipped about her shoulders, and with gentle tenderness held her against him.

"Drink this," he ordered. "All of it."

She moved mechanically to obey his instructions. Her eyes opened. She took the glass which he held out to her. But it did not reach her lips. Her fingers became nerveless and the glass fell to the deck with a silvery tinkle.

On the fourth finger of her husband's right hand was a ring of platinum, carved into the twisting, writhing body of a serpent coiled to strike. In its fangs glowed a ruby like a drop of blood.

At the height of her panic a voice spoke reassuringly in the confused jumble. "Steady, old girl."

And Ruth Said—

By
Mary Louise
ANAWALT

She left Broadway for a Show Boat playing the Ohio,
on an Impulse only a Woman would have.

RUTH stepped out of the taxi and drew her wrap with its near platinum fox collar about her. She was chilled with the raw cold of the dawn. But the quiet was grateful after the din of the night club they had quitted, the refreshing air cleared her head, which was beginning to spin from mixed drinks.

Her companion, a large plump man in a light spring top-coat buttoned carefully to conceal a stain of Burgundy which besmirched the bosom of his dress shirt, possessed himself of one of her hands as they walked slowly toward the steps that led to the boarding-house.

"You are a good little girl," he said with the impressive care of the man who knows that at any minute his tongue may trip. "You go home early and sober." He repeated it, "Early and sober," and pressed her hand gently with his fingers.

"Yeah, early, all right," Ruth laughed a bit shakily. "And I hope I'm sober."

"You'll give me an answer to my li'l proposition soon?" He peered into her face. "It'll mean the star part for you in that supper club revue . . . don't you forget that."

"Well . . . Don't rush me." Somehow she didn't want to talk about that now.

"I'm not." His under lip stuck out the least bit and he rallied his scattered wits. "I've waited a long time for your answer. We must leave next week . . . Everything is arranged."

"All right." She looked down at the smooth, plump hand that held both hers. "All right," she repeated, and evading his lips she wrenched loose from his grasp and ran up the steps into the house.

Jo-Jo, her roommate, was sound asleep, a black bit of fuzz being alone visible above the counterpane. Silken undergarments lay about in untidy swirls, a gay red and yellow dance frock hung from the chandelier by one infinitesimal strap. Ruth put a hand to a suddenly throbbing head and groped her way to a window, throwing it up to the middle.

It was nearly noon when Ruth crawled out to assuage the pangs of hunger. Fully an hour later her roommate called for ice-water and begged to be allowed to die. Then she sat up, her round flat little face puckered with anguish. Her eyes roved about the room and lit on a bouquet of crushed purplish blossoms languishing in a cracked water pitcher.

"Daddy still says it with orchids," she remarked.

Ruth turned from her toast to cast a cursory glance over her shoulder.

"I wish he'd think up something new once in a while. Just because they cost money isn't saying I like them."

"I only ask to be led to a little playmate that has the same failings. Mine always run to rosebuds with lots of salad around them. You pulled down a prize if you'd ask me."

Ruth buttered toast without replying, planting a top-lofty stack of crisp slices on the side of the table nearest the bed.

"Half of it's mine," she said, going to heat the water for tea. Jo-Jo fell to counting the pieces greedily.

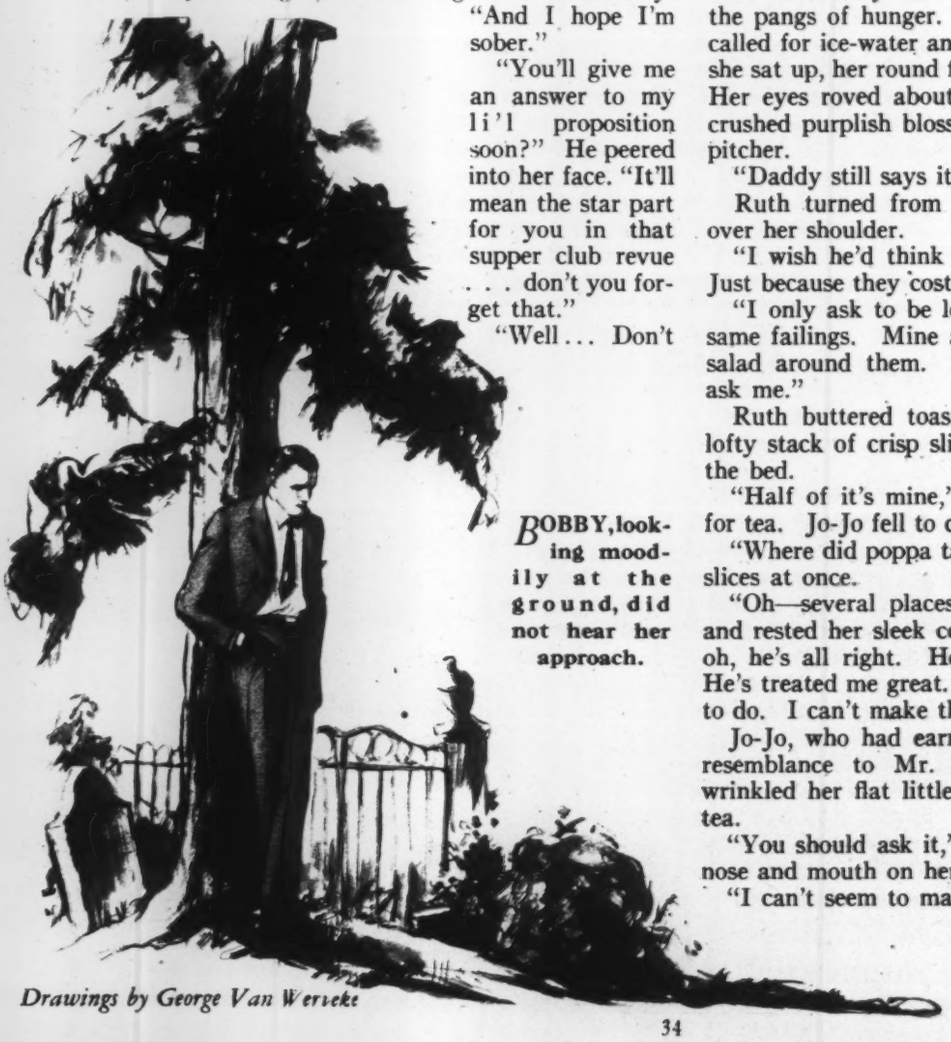
"Where did poppa take us?" Jo-Jo helped herself to two slices at once.

"Oh—several places." Ruth threw herself in a chair and rested her sleek coppery head on one hand. "He's—oh, he's all right. He's a prince. I can't say he ain't. He's treated me great. But, oh, Jo-Jo, I don't know what to do. I can't make the leap. What would you do?"

Jo-Jo, who had earned her name because of a fancied resemblance to Mr. Barnum's famous dog-faced boy, wrinkled her flat little nose and took a sip of piping hot tea.

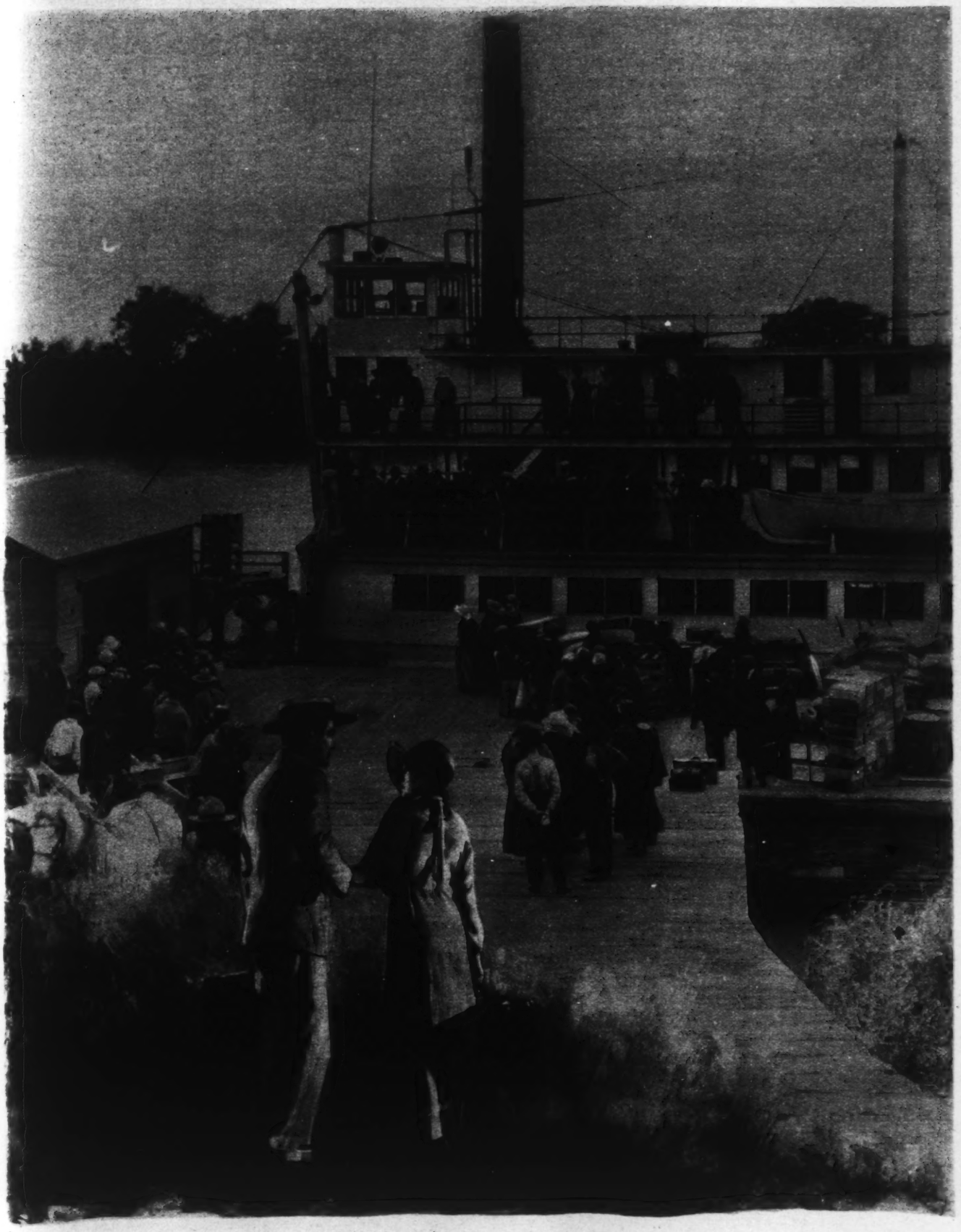
"You should ask it," she replied cryptically, wiping her nose and mouth on her pajamas' sleeve.

"I can't seem to make the leap," Ruth repeated. "I—Maybe you've heard me talk about my buddy, Bobby Blake, the fellow I teamed with. I think I'll take a little trip out to Spring-



BOBBY, looking moodily at the ground, did not hear her approach.

Drawings by George Van Werveke



The show boat *Majestic* was taking on vaudeville talent in all lines. Ruth and Bobby joined out at Mammoth.

field and find out how he is before—before I——"

"That's a nawful place, Springfield." Jo-Jo, who had not been listening, finally caught a word. "I toured out there last summer with a party, and of all the dead places! Nothing this side of Chicago."

"I don't know about that. We played split weeks, three-a-day, and we didn't have much time to hunt joy joints."

"We? Who's we?"

"My partner, Bobby Blake, I been telling you about. 'Blake and Blake, the Rube and the Girl!'"

"Gee, was you caught young, too? I didn't know that. Got your final papers?"

"We wasn't married. He had a wife then. Some place West. Died since. She used to bleed him. He worked me first as a child song and dance."

"Yeah? Well, I'm not staying awake nights thinking about my past."

"If I could be sure." Ruth pushed aside her plate and lit a cigaret. "I want to go with Trev on this trip . . . I

know he'll keep his promises and I know he's got the coin to keep them with. But—oh, I don't know——" She got to her feet and went over to the window, gazing unseeingly out into the street.

"I'd know if I was asked." Jo-Jo philosophically appropriated the rest of the toast.

"I'm so sick of it all." Ruth burst out. "I'm on the Big Street, I got work and all, but being just good enough won't get me anywhere. Enough to eat, maybe, but no electrics or Paris revues. To get them you have to have kale—some one to back you. And now I have the chance—I can't decide to take it. I don't know—I'm a fool, I guess."

"I guess you are," Jo-Jo assented, falling back among the pillows.

"If I'd even heard from Bobby lately—— He always used to wire at Christmas and send flowers or something. But nothing doing this year."

"Probably met a dame," Jo-Jo contributed drowsily.

Ruth sat for a long time smoking and thinking. Trev wouldn't wait forever. She had to decide now. A ring of cigaret stubs surrounded her chair before she came to a decision. Suddenly she jumped to her feet.

"Jo-Jo," she shook one bare shoulder which protruded from the covers, "what's the name of that blonde Huysler's going to use for my number? Can't I reach her through the agency?"

"Gloria something or other. Where you going?"

"Back to Springfield. I got to see Bob, that's all. Trev will just have to wait a few days. He'll have to! For I got to go back to see Bob."

"Well, it's dope, whatever it is," Ruth flung at the doctor.

IT WAS really only a hunch that carried Ruth around the corner to Mrs. Girard's "Meals and Rooms," in Springfield. She knew the Gus Sun office, a vaudeville booking agency, would be closed.

It had been five years since she had climbed the boarding-house stairs but she found her way unerringly. "Bobby Blake, second floor back," a voice had called from the rear hall. It seemed that it had only been day before yesterday that she had avoided the old hall rack which stood on the landing and automatically taken two steps at the top—although the treacherous broken tread, she discovered later, had been repaired.

"It's me, Bob," she called a little breathlessly. "Let me in. It's Ruth."

"What the——" She could hear his quick, nervous step and his brief but bitter struggle with the lock. The same foolish impatience with all impeding barriers!

When the door was finally flung open and he stood before her—tall and gaunt, his curling black hair tumbled about his brow, his blue eyes, clear and childlike, the only happy thing about him—she had to fight an instant for composure. Then, stepping into the room with both hands outstretched she said, "Hello, Bob," as if she had just been around the corner.

"It's little Ruthie," he said over and over again, smiling half unbelievingly. "Little old carrot-top." He chuckled and swept off the small close-fitting hat which obscured her shining head. Then, with an exclamation he sent the cloche hurtling in the general direction of the bed. "Your hair," he cried, "what have they done to your hair!" A ruffled mass of artfully artless rings in front, it followed the contour of her head in the back, glassily smooth and cropped close to her scalp.

She passed her fingers over it, grinning like a guilty little boy. "I had it cut last fall," she said.

"It wasn't fever or anything?" He scanned her anxiously. "Just damn style," he concluded, and gave her a none too gentle shake. "Just damn fool style."

She nodded.

His eyes ran over her modishly simple frock unseeingly, and he touched the buttons on the shoulders and sleeves

THAT night Ruth sold the Charleston to an Ohio River audience.

in an absent-minded, childish fashion as he talked.

"Did you just come in? Where from? Tell me all about everything."

"O, Bob, tell *me* about *you!*" As he talked she studied his lined face; took one of his long, restless hands in hers, quieting it.

"Nothing new, sister, same old circuit. I tried Tab for a season and then three-a-day for a change from that."

"Why didn't you write to me?" she asked. "I saw in the *Bill-board* where you joined out with the Clymer's Cycle of Fun and where you'd quit the show. But your last wire didn't say what show you was on and I got to worrying that you was sick or something. Why didn't you answer when I wired you?"

"Well," Bobby hesitated, "Billy Clymer took your wire and it was some time before I even got to see it."

"Then you were sick." Ruth turned to regard him anxiously. "You tell me the honest-to-God on this. Spill it!"

"It wasn't much. Just a touch of flu, but it kind of pulled me down."

"You didn't get to not sleeping? You didn't let *it* get you again, Bob!" she cried, frightened at the thought.

"I swear it!" He hit his knee with his open palm. "I stuck it out and got the better of it, but I had to leave the show for a while. And I haven't done such a helluva lot of sleeping since."

He had been six months, Ruth counted quickly, without enough sleep. His nerves must be at the breaking point. With an effort, she asked him about his plans. As she surmised, he had none. He was waiting for something to turn up. She saw him fumble in his breast pocket.

"Just some pills the doc give me," he explained; "not so strong as the ones he had to start me with."

Ruth held out her hand for the box and studied the name and address on the direction label.

"They're—safe?" she asked.

Bob nodded. "I got the doctor's oath on it," he said earnestly. "I couldn't take the risk. They're great stuff. At five a throw they ought to be. And now that's enough about me," he broke off, with something of his old gayety. "It's your turn."

"O, there's nothing much to tell. I'm not in electrics but I got lots of company." [*Continued on page 86*]

"You get a night's sleep on this," said Mrs. Fraser, "before you do anything desperate."

Ruth sniffed and, turning her back upon Bobby, "I'll sleep on it," she said grudgingly.

MOVIE STARS
in the
RADIO ROOM

For the LOVE

What Happens when Those who are Seen but not Heard are Heard but Not Seen

SAY what you will—and who has a better right?—motion picture stars are up against it. On the screen they're seen but not heard. Over the radio they're heard but not seen.

A cinema celebrity can face a battery of cameras, electricians, directors, prop boys, visiting delegates from a Philadelphia woman's club, and the innocent and critical bystanders who drift into every studio, and go through the various film emotions ranging from a maiden's prayer to a widow's despair without flickering an eyelash.

Stand her or him in front of the microphone, and she or he gets a ghastly attack of stage fright. Everything, they claim, that can be said about the movies has already been said, so why should they try to convey a Message—and about what? Besides, they argue, their fans are interested in seeing them, not listening to their voices.

Some of them absolutely refuse to broadcast, though they cannot explain the panic that assails them at the thought. The fright of stage stars can be explained by the fact that they miss the stimulus of applause, but film favorites are used to that lack. However, there are others, the best examples of whom are Lew Cody and Johnny Hines, who go at this radio question with the poise and aplomb equaled only by a blonde demonstrator baking buttered biscuits in a Broadway calory cave.

ONE of the best speeches I ever heard was unintentionally given by Renee Adoree. Renee, French and vivacious, was asked to go on the air. She begged to be excused. The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer office pleaded, but with an accent and gestures she replied that she would nevair, nevair speak over ze radio.

The bright young man who was running the entertainment prevailed upon her at least to come to the studio and pose for her photograph standing in front of the microphone. As the cameraman was getting ready the bright young man asked her to pretend that she was talking to her unseen audience, in order to get animation into the picture. Renee, taking it as a huge joke, complied. He asked her to translate what she had just said into English, while the photographer was changing plates. Obligingly she translated. Her remarks were charming, witty, and spontaneous.

Next to the broadcasting studio, however, and separate from it, was the mechanic's room. Over the mike, which she had thought was shut off, the announcer sent out the speech, which according to the listeners was unusually entertaining. And not until Renee reads this will she know what was put over on her.

WHEN Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks were in New York not long ago, they agreed to talk for the Professional Woman's League, with Mary's stipulation that they talk together. It was her first appearance and Doug's third.

Mary was nervous, but didn't show it except that her face grew tense and a little paler than usual.

Doug, however, showed his agitation. He fidgeted, paced the floor and, as he does when he is nervous, stammered a little. His face was a total blank; and until he got started he lost the sparkle that characterizes his most ordinary conversation. For Fairbanks is one of the few people who can talk on any subject for any number of hours without repeating himself once.

When the joint speeches were over Mary was made an honorary member of the organization. Then, forgetting in her nervousness that it was a women's club, Mary said she saw no reason why Doug couldn't be made an honorary member too, as they always belonged to the same organizations. And Doug because of all the excitement is now a member in good standing.

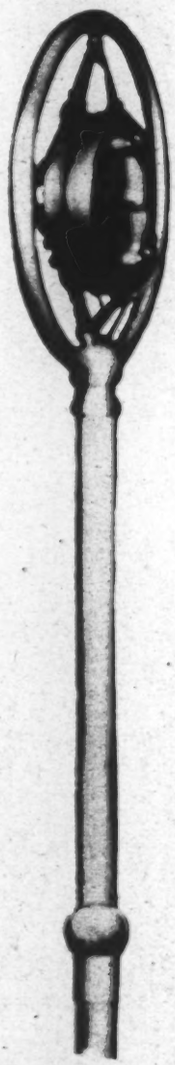
ONE of the first times that Jackie Coogan was introduced over the air, a speech was prepared for him, the sort that one would naturally expect a youngster to give. Jackie was about eight or nine years old then, and it was planned to have him read it off.

Did he get in front of the mike and tell the listening kiddies all about the cute tricks his dogs did, and how it feels not to have to go to a regular school? He did not. Jackie tore up the speech, said it was childish stuff that would make people think he was only a kid, and burst forth into the soliloquy from "Hamlet"!

Mae Murray of the pouting lips and twinkling feet was asked to talk on the subject of dancing. When Mae arrived at the studio hundreds of people were standing outside, looking through the glass partitions. She went to a mirror, made up exactly as she would if she were to appear before the camera, and when she returned to the studio and began to talk her feet danced, keeping time with her words.

Gloria Swanson, the Marquise de la Falaise de la Coudraye, talked recently in Chicago. She came into the studio serenely enough, but betrayed her nervousness when she requested that the people in the room be asked to leave. When they were gone she started to speak, and then stopped. She looked at Henri, the Marquis, who is known as Hank, and when he smiled back at her reassuringly, went on. Ain't love wonderful!

MILTON SILLS was once a professor of psychology in a Chicago university, so he's used to public speaking. He never writes out his speeches, merely decides on a general idea of what he wants to say, and says it. But all members of the celluloid set weren't once college professors,



HERE are millions of dollars in screen talent facing "Mike," the microphone. And he doesn't bat an eyelash!

# of MIKE!

By
ROSE PELSWICK
Motion Picture Critic

and perhaps it is his experience in matters psychological that leaves him calm and un-a-Freud (like the writer-Editor's note).

D. W. Griffith, the director, has a perfect radio voice—deep and resonant. Somehow, however, radio affects him in a sentimental way. At a motion picture banquet that was to be broadcast, when he faced the mike tears crept into his voice and eyes and he spoke about his mother. The solemn, the uncanny effect of a ghostly audience aroused the sense of the dramatic that is his emotional self.

Mae Busch was booked for a certain afternoon, but contracted a very severe cold beforehand. Good trouper that she is, however, she said she wouldn't disappoint any one after the announcements had been sent out. So the mike was installed by her bed in her hotel, and between sneezes and coughs she did her stuff. It took three maids, four bell-hops and several friends to take care of the telegrams and flowers that came from sympathetic listeners-in.

AT the last ball given by the New York Newspaper Women's Club, all the stars present were introduced on the air. Perhaps because it was an informal gathering they seemed more at ease than they would have otherwise.

Marion Davies was the best of the group, talking very naturally and amusingly—but she insisted on holding onto the mike as if to prevent her voice from escaping. Marion, you may recall, was the first woman to talk across the ocean on the radio when, about two years ago, she broadcast to London.

Lois Wilson and Richard Dix, by popular request, talked together. Dick was so upset that when he faced the mike he merely bowed into it, and would have dashed away if some one hadn't pulled him back.

May Allison shrugged her shoulders, laughed, and told a funny story. Eleanor Boardman chewed her finger-nails, but went at it in a sporting manner. Carol Dempster fluttered her hands the way she does on the screen, and became serious. Adolphe Menjou and Norma Talmadge refused to go on the air at all.

Norma talked once while she was in the East, and vows she'll never do it again. All authors, she pointed out, don't talk entertainingly, so why expect it of actors and actresses whose ability lies in pantomime.

Buster Keaton, the frozen-faced comedian, refuses to broadcast. His argument is he's afraid if he ever faced the silent instrument he'd burst out laughing, which would ruin his reputation as a humorous sphinx.

RICHARD BARTHELMESS is another star who is shy about talking over the radio. Ronald Colman, naturally reticent, backs out on the ground that he has no radio personality. Whereas men stars refuse and stick to it, the women will take a chance. I've seen Leatrice Joy tremble as she walked up and down the corridor outside a studio, with her brother holding one arm and the announcer holding the other to keep her from leaving. And when they got her to the mike, she made a splendid address.

When Douglas MacLean came from Hollywood to New York some time ago with a print of his picture, "Introduce Me," we planned a radio interview at station WJZ. In the manner of all good interviewers I had prepared the required set of leading questions.

After a hasty rehearsal, we went to the studio. Everything was all set. I cleared my throat, intending to begin on the first bromidic remark when Doug said:

"So this man—and he looked intelligent too—told me I could have the horse for $1500."

He paused, and I gasped. "What?"

"Yes. So I gave him the dollar and a half, and the horse was mine."

The rest of the interview Doug took out of my hands entirely, interpolating several gags that made it a success! But then he had been on the stage and was perfectly at ease.

Now there is a rule in the studios that advertising be not too freely indulged in. Doug complied to the unwritten law until the end of his talk. Then he pointed toward the announcer.

"Is that man," he asked me into the mike, "Major Andrew White?"

"Yes."

"'Introduce Me.'"

The Powerful Story of a Man who Invoked the so-called Unwritten Law and Found that He was Facing—

The OTHER

By

ROBERT McBLAIR

A LIGHT from outside flickered in bright, mottled patches across the long library window. Above the whine of the wind in the pines, Talbot Wright heard the purring of a motor entering his grounds. The platinum watch on his wrist showed half after nine. He could think of no one who would have a reason for calling upon him at this hour, and he resented the threat of intrusion upon his deliberately designed solitude. But this was not a time when he could afford to alienate any one by indulging his irritations.

He closed the French novel he had been reading, first noting with habitual precision the number of the page, and sat very still watching the red flames eat cruelly into the punky logs in the wide brick fireplace; waiting for the sharp scrunch of the tires in the crushed stone under the *porte cochère,* and after that for the sharper, more penetrating sound of the front door-bell.

He had become very sensitive to sound these past two weeks. He had, indeed, become acutely conscious of the world he was living in. It was almost as if during the three years of his marriage he had been wrapped in a soft but inescapable cocoon of jealousy, of pain, of hate, of introspection; and now that Betty was dead, now that Lucien Garcia, too, had met a violent death, the cocoon had been removed, exposing his nerves to the unaccustomed impacts of actuality.

For three years his mind had turned in upon itself, threading and rethreading the dark corridors of his own unhappiness. Betty's whim had been his law. His life had been to beat with his hands, with his heart, at the flame of her amour with the Italian singer, only to have it consume him; while she, wily, masterful, and elusive, had retained the childlike grace and loveliness which had bound him with links of steel.

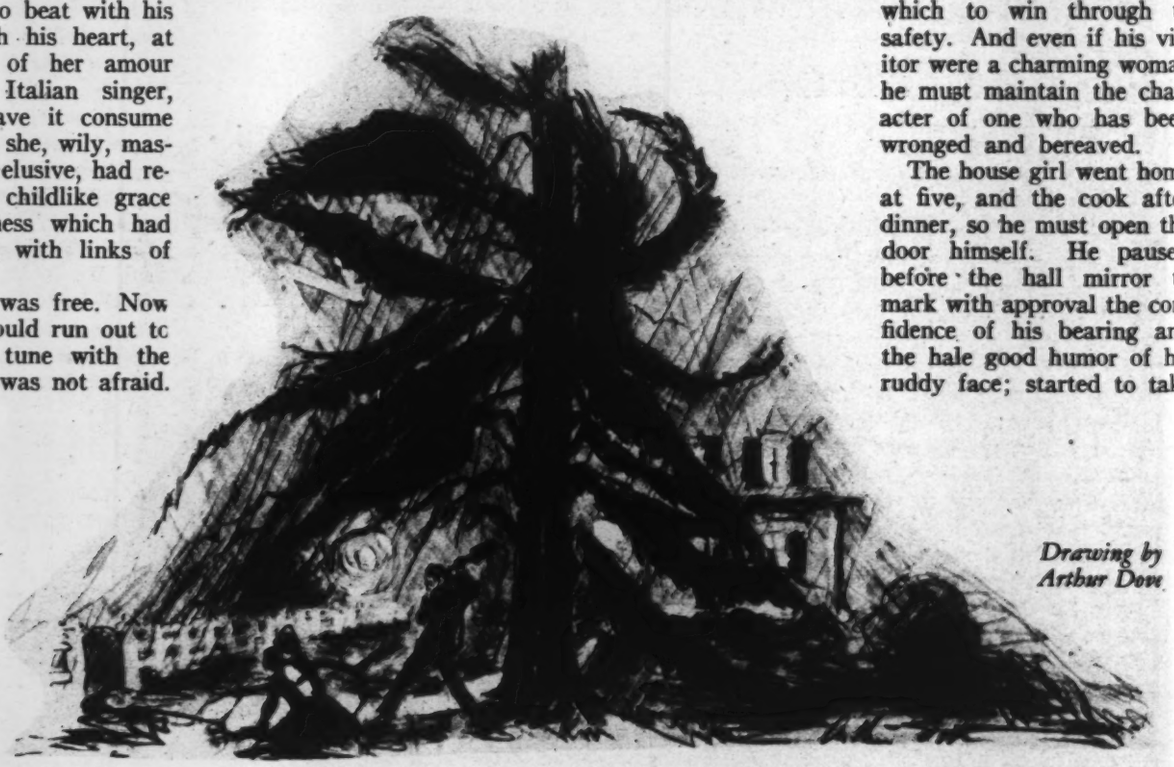
Now he was free. Now his mind could run out to vibrate in tune with the world. He was not afraid. All knowledge of what he had done had been buried safely and finally with the bodies of his wife and her lover. They were dead. He was alive, and entitled to enjoy his living. So be it!

He saw himself objectively, sitting there in dinner clothes in his own library, a man against the world, though the world didn't know it. Well, in a sense every man was pitted against the world; and he was better equipped than most. A bit scarred by booze, but handsome in a high-blooded, blue-eyed way; sound in wind and limb; only forty-three. Fate had dealt him a pretty good handful of cards. His neighbors in this fashionable suburban development regarded him, he was sure, with sympathy. A husband whose complaisance had been elevated by an unsavory tragedy into the glare of newspaper head-lines could become overnight a sort of pathetic martyr. Particularly if he were marriageable and well-to-do.

Tires scrunched slidingly in the crushed stone drive. A car door slammed. Talbot Wright wondered keenly who it could be. No man, he was sure; the men of his acquaintance would not pay him visits of sympathy. It might be a woman. At Betty's funeral he first had realized that this was one of the things that would come to him with his freedom. He was half smiling when the bell's shrill clamor pierced his thoughts.

He rose to his feet, realized that his heart was beating a bit, and stopped deliberately to smooth the vest over his youthfully flat stomach and to feel of his black bow tie. He must watch his nerve; that was his one weapon with which to win through to safety. And even if his visitor were a charming woman he must maintain the character of one who has been wronged and bereaved.

The house girl went home at five, and the cook after dinner, so he must open the door himself. He paused before the hall mirror to mark with approval the confidence of his bearing and the hale good humor of his ruddy face; started to take



Drawing by Arthur Dow

In a fury of fear, Wright had seized the gardener's shovel.

Unwritten Law

a flower for his buttonhole from the bowl on the lacquer table, thought better of it, switched on the porch light and swung open the iron-bound oaken door.

"Well, hello, Nicky!" he said.

His greeting was a triumph of social habit over impulse, because Nicky Morrisette, the local prosecuting attorney, was just about the last person he might have expected to see. Of course Nicky and Betty and he used to see one another frequently at the golf club. As in most suburbs, there was only one set here. But what could have brought the young lawyer tonight? The damp wind, roaring in from the bay, whipped the long black cape about Nicky's slender figure, revealing the shine of white shirt and vest. Nicky, a thin ebony cane in the gloved hand holding the silk hat tight to his head, his white teeth gleaming beneath the small upturned moustache, his black eyes glinting in characteristic mockery at Talbot Wright's surprise—well, Nicky looked like the devil himself, with his tail hung over his shoulder.

"Come in, old man. I'm damn glad to see you." Talbot Wright couldn't forbear a glance past the hood of the limousine to a spot on the needle-strewn lawn. There, in that very triangle of light from the porch lamp, Lucien Garcia had lain not a fortnight ago, while Betty stood screaming in the doorway. Betty, his own wife had tried to give away what he had done! And there the body had stayed till Betty was silent and he could return and drag Garcia, too, to the cockpit of the gasoline launch. Talbot Wright felt a cold breath between his shoulder-blades, and closed the door upon the sound of the small waves lashing against the windward side of his boat-house beyond the pines.

"Walk in the library, Nicky," said Wright. "I'll be right back." And he went through the dining-room to the pantry, ostensibly for drinks, but really to give himself time to think. Nicky Morrisette had known Betty before he had met her. Nicky's devil-may-care gayety, too, made him of a kind with both Betty and Lucien Garcia, and a stranger, fundamentally, to himself, though he had known Nicky all his life.

Talbot Wright put a siphon of fizz on the silver waiter, and a bottle of ginger ale; added a decanter of the local corn whiskey—most of the men preferred that because they knew it was pure—and a quart bottle of Scotch, which might or might not be good. He was reaching up to the shelf for glasses when he remembered that for the two years Nicky Morrisette had been prosecuting attorney, he had been something of a genius at his work, with a reputation of never having lost a case.

The glass slipped from his hand and crashed into a hundred pieces on the hardwood floor. He reached for another, and this one, too, dropped. He noticed then how his hand was trembling. The nervous strain of the past two weeks, for all his outward composure, must have been greater than he had thought.

He got down two glasses carefully and filled one of them with a generous measure of corn. He had not intended to drink any more that night. It had been drink, drink, drink which had kept his nerve and will numb for the past

WHEN a second glass dropped, he noticed how his hand was trembling.

three years. And drink always brought up from within him the hate, the love, the fear which now he must keep bottled up in an exterior of icy calm.

He took the drink, felt the grateful warmth and strength running through his blood, held out his hand and saw that it was steady. His confidence came back. This was really a lucky visit. Nicky as prosecuting attorney was the very man to keep friendly with. Of course. He lit a cigaret, pushed open the swinging door with his elbow, and carried the tinkling tray to the library. Nicky Morrisette was balanced gracefully on the arm of the sofa, waiting for him.

"Well, Nicky, here's Scotch and corn." Talbot Wright poured himself out a drink of the corn. "Can I give you some of this? Say when." He added ginger ale to the glasses, handed Morrisette one, and drank his down. Morrisette, however, after raising the glass to his lips, put it down again. He rose to his feet and began tapping a gold-tipped cigaret against the back of his hand. There was a look on his lean dark face that Wright didn't enjoy.

"I don't think I ought to drink your booze," said Morrisette slowly, "till you know what I have come here for."

Talbot Wright tried to laugh. His throat and lips were stiff. "Well!" he began jocosely, but let the sentence

drop. Nicky Morrisette looked up from the cigaret and regarded him steadily.

"I have come for your confession," said Nicky.

Talbot Wright put the glass deliberately back on the waiter, took a handkerchief from his breast pocket and touched his lips. Some separate part of himself observed that he had forgotten to serve any ice with the drinks, and wondered if in the stress of what had occurred that violent night he could have overlooked some significant detail. Nicky Morrisette was as keen as a fox. While he was trying to still the tumult in his blood he heard himself ask quite naturally:

"Confession? What confession, Nicky?"

"I had a warrant sworn out for your arrest today," said the prosecuting attorney. "The grand jury will indict you tomorrow on a charge of first degree murder." Morrisette lit his cigaret and flicked the match into the fire. "Listen to me, Wright. You know I don't start a thing like this unless I know I've got the goods. I can convict you, and the sentiment in this community will be such that you will likely get the chair. But I've come here tonight, alone, to give you a chance."

The warmth of the liquor had died in Talbot Wright. His hand trembled slightly as he poured out for himself a larger drink. He would have to keep his nerve. He felt the blood coming back to his face as the fiery fluid tingled down to the tips of his fingers. He felt his courage return. No one except Betty had seen him strike Lucien Garcia; he was sure of that. It had been just such a night as this, of wind and blackness; the very sound of the soughing trees made him experience again the chill of his fear. Absurd of him, of course. Lucien Garcia wouldn't trouble him any more. Yet he still felt his old terror of the man; the feeling that had impelled him against his will to go with Garcia out into the night to fight the thing out with their hands.

BEFORE he could reach her she took the receiver from the telephone. "Police," she screamed.

He hadn't gone of his own accord. Even though the man had taunted him that night in his own library, had sworn at him sneeringly in soft Italian syllables. But when Garcia had hustled him along by the arm with vibrant laughter, and snatches of barbaric, exulting song, as if they were characters in one of the Italian's damnable operas, he could not pull away like a frightened child. Not with Betty there by the fireplace looking on, half nervous and half amused, a cocktail glass in her hand.

So Garcia had dragged him forth, slamming the front door, shutting them out together in the howling wind. They had faced each other on the lawn in the faint triangle of illumination from the porch light. Talbot Wright's heart congealed again with fear, as memory compressed that scene into the space of a vivid second. Lucien Garcia's powerful, broad figure had assumed an attitude of menace. "She will not leave you for me!" Garcia had cried above the wind. "But now, see! You shall leave us!" And he had come forward, hands extended, with such a grin of hate that Talbot Wright had literally whimpered aloud in terror.

Then the heavy pine branch, torn free by the storm, had hurtled sidewise through the air, striking the singer and pitching him forward. He had pushed himself dazedly back upon his knees, his face dark with dirt and a spray of dead pine needles clinging to his forehead. The handle of a gardener's shovel, bright with dew, gleamed nearby in the light. Wright had seized it; in a fury of fear had swung the iron blade again and again, till the figure in dinner clothes after a final tremor lay still upon the grass. Then he had looked up and seen Betty standing in the doorway. The white mask of her face brought to him first the significance of what he had done.

Talbot Wright returned to the present suddenly. Carefully he placed the empty glass back upon the silver waiter. "I've got to keep my nerve," he thought to himself. "If any one had seen it there would have been a howl before this. Morrisette is bluffing." He took a fresh cigaret from the humidor on the table, lit it, and drew the smoke deep into his lungs.

"I am sorry, Nicky," he answered, and was encouraged by the calm naturalness of his voice. "If I had killed Garcia you wouldn't have to bluff me into admitting it. I'd tell you. You know perfectly well that no harm would come to me from it. Down in these parts they believe in the unwritten law."

"You are not being indicted for the murder of Garcia," said Nicky Morrisette grimly, "but for killing your wife."

Talbot Wright stood motionless, staring at the little golden beads which circled the corn in the decanter like a noose. One of the logs in the fireplace broke, momentarily coloring with red the glasses and the silver waiter. "He can't know the facts," Talbot Wright was silently assuring himself. "No one on earth could know."

"I have come here to help you out, Wright," Morrisette continued harshly, "though God knows you don't deserve it. As I told you I've got the goods, and I can send you to the chair if I try hard enough. At any rate convict you of second degree murder. But I don't want you to go to trial. If you did you would put up justification as your defense. I don't want Betty Wright's name dragged through the mire after she is dead and unable to defend herself. I have come here to give you a chance. If you

By hauling in on the rope and paying it out again he kept the little craft with its grim burden headed for the open

tell me the truth I will see that you are treated lightly on this charge. Judge Grigsby will accept a plea of guilty of manslaughter. That means that, with good behaviour, you'd probably be out on parole in less than seven years. You wouldn't be much more than fifty then. You'd have many years of life before you. What do you say, Wright? Will you come clean, or are you going to force me to fight you?"

Talbot Wright poured himself out another drink of liquor. His hand was steady as he held the honey-colored liquid up to the light. Morrisette was bluffing. Only two people, Betty and Garcia, could have thrown any light on the matter, and they were dead. Morrisette had no case at all. And yet there was something about the sight of Morrisette there, waiting, which reminded him of Lucien Garcia and brought back from somewhere the old buried fear. Perhaps it was the booze that was doing it. Well, the hair of the dog is good for the bite. He drank the glass of corn at a gulp, and at once felt better for it. A person who had drunk as much [*Continued on page 104*]

The Gas Man

"Grandma," said Hen, "you could get by the Poily Gate without a police badge."

HEN DALL'S alley saw a marvel, more prodigious perhaps than the descent of an aeroplane on the North Pole. It had been raining, and the thunderous thing came down the dirty lane throwing up tidal waves of yellowish water from the small, deep lakes which covered the chuck holes. What a car! Even temporary pollution could not dim the glory of its silver-plated trimmings; the astounding pomposity of its glassy tonneau in whose hearse-like interior a fat and elderly lady with a very high nose, very prominent eyes, and a small, jet-trimmed hat on a very tall pompadour, gazed with the arrogance of an old-fashioned queen. Two men in plum-colored livery leaped down from the box. One of them opened a door.

"My man," began the queen, overlooking Hen Dall and addressing the red pump against which he leaned, "I understand that you are selling excellent gasoline for twenty-three cents a gallon."

Hen Dall came forward, rested a dusty shoe on the running board, and gave her a neighborly if somewhat smut-daubed smile. "Grandma," he said, "if yer always as right as that you can git by the Poily Gate without a police badge."

"Take your greasy hand off that door!" she commanded in the voice of a royal parrot. "I don't intend to have my car spoiled any more than it is on this terrible road." Then more restrainedly, "How can you sell gasoline for twenty-three cents when the man up the road charges twenty-four?"

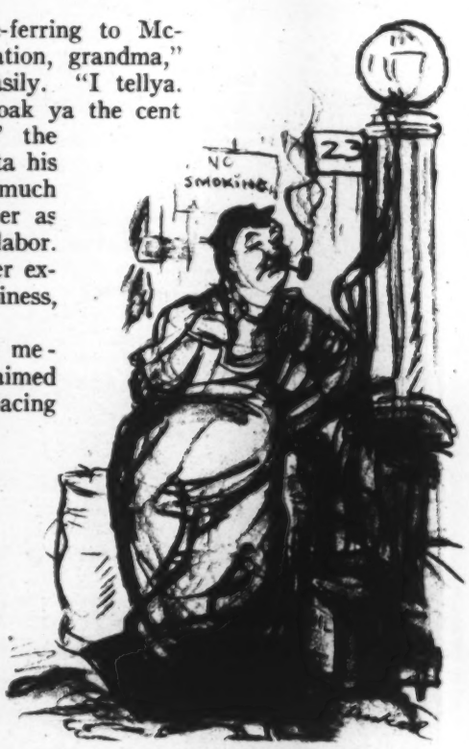
"A GIRL should choose 'er soul-mate according to the beckonings of 'er young heart."

"I bet yer re-ferring to McCall's service station, grandma," ventured Hen easily. "I tellya. McCall's gotta soak ya the cent extra account o' the water he puts inta his gas. It ain't so much the price of water as it is the cost of labor. Gotta look out fer expenses in this business, grandma."

"Don't - call - me - grandma!" exclaimed the great lady, spacing every word "Jackson!" this to her very military chauffeur. "How much gasoline do we need?"

"Ten, madam," replied the soldierly person.

"Rol-lo!" This from Hen Dall to the weak-minded boy who sometimes assisted him. "Pump the lady ten and put a little air in 'er shoes." Having surrendered the manual labor he devoted himself to a conversational opportunity not to be missed.



"MY DAUGHTER'S a great clubwoman," says Hen Dall. "Night-clubwoman, if y'know whatta mean."

"Y'see, madam," he plunged in with the rapid staccato of a machine-gun, "it jest seems like I been waiting fer you all day."

The great lady's chest went out and her eyes bulged as if the air-pump was working on her as well as the tires. She spluttered a little, but Hen went on, "Everybody got family troubles, I guess. I gotta wife named Japonica, but I call 'er Jap fer short. Y'oughta meet 'er. She'd

By WALLACE IRWIN

A New Humorous Character Whose Americanese is Funnier than the Japanese Schoolboy's

Drawings by
AUGUST HENKEL

make it worth yer while. Then I gotta swell-looking kid, seventeen last birthday. Yessir. Sorta short and full o' pep. Looks a lot like you, I bet, when you was young. I call 'er Strawberry, but Jap won't stand fer that because 'er real name is Imogene Maud Dall.

"Anyhow, madam, I want yer advice. Don't look so sore. I didn't callya grandma, did I? Now this here Strawberry is different from most o' the young goils in our set. She don't tote a gun or a flask, not that I know about. Course she goes round in sassiety a lot, and I don't think it's quite safe unless you carry yer own gun and yer own gin in self-defense. But Strawberry's peculiar that way. Are you a club-woman, grand—I mean, madam? Well, Strawberry's a great clubwoman—night-club-woman, if y'know whatta mean.

"I fleed away before Jap could git in the next wallop."

"Last week I says to Jap, 'Jap,' I says, 'if you'd pry Strawberry outa bed in the morning so she could help wash the noon dishes maybe you'd stop being so nervous thacha bite my leg off every time I come inta the house.' But ya can't git round Jap when it comes to dialogue. 'Why doncha wrap yer mouth around that seven cent seegar,' says Jap, 'and stop nagging me? If Imogene Maud don't have the advantages of other goils howdya expect 'er to marry good? Or maybe you'd be salified if she took some low-life like a ice-man or a milkman.' 'She don't stay in the kitchen long enough to meet no iceman or milkman,' says I, and fleed away before Jap could git in the next wallop."

The great lady made a sound which Hen Dall mistook for approval, for he hastened on:

"And now whacha think? It might as well be printed on a stylish card, 'Miss Imogene Maud Dall Announces Her Engagement to a Tea-room Worm. Mr. and Mrs. Hen Dall Are Cordially Invited.' Sompn like that. She come around to me yestiddy to borra two dollars and a cigaret. 'Strawberry,' I says, trying to look like 'er father would, 'whaziss idle roomer bout yer hooking up with a saxophone-chaser? Lookit here, little goilie, it's a great mistake to marry people ya dunno nothing about. A great mistake. Yer mother din't know nothing about me when we got married, and fer twenty years she's paid and paid and paid. Tell me this salad-dresser's name, if he's got one.' 'Lister,' says she. 'Well, whacha know bout this Mister Lister?' says I. 'He wears a fourteen-and-a-half collar,' she cries. 'And if a goil can't choose 'er soul-mate according to the beckonings of 'er young heart whacha gonna do with the Constitution?' 'Amend it again,' says I. 'And lissen, little goil. If I was choosing a cave man I'd git sompn bigger'n a fourteen-and-a-half. Bring around yer Lister and let's give 'im the eye.'

"Well, madam, whacha think? Last night when I locked up the gas pump and went home I heard sompn going oodle-doo in the parlor, and there set Strawberry with a fella all dressed up aristocratic like a head waiter. 'This is Lister,' says she. 'I gesso,' says I.

"Gosh, grandma, it would have froze ya stiffer'n yare if you'd a-saw the look I give 'im. 'Whattaya do fer a living?' I hollers. 'I'm a hunter,' says he. 'Whaddaya hunt—blind tigers?' I ast. 'Nossir,' says he. 'I hunt woik.' 'Ya must hunt it with a camera,' says I, 'fer when a fella reaches your age and can't even git into politics or bootlegging there [*Continued on page 104*]

"I'D A-THREW him out, but jess then Jap yells, 'Come to bed, Hen.'"

No Fool, ELAINE

She *couldn't* be—having had her Worldly Schooling in an Atlantic City Manicure Shop for Men

By MARY SINGER

HE STOOD in the doorway as if he had half a mind to turn and bolt—a muscular, compact figure a trifle short of six feet, in a blatantly new suit and creaking yellow shoes with a shine like a mirror's on them. Even to Miss Ella Bonner's knowledgeable eye he presented a startling picture. Which was saying a good deal, for Ella Bonner was supposed to be shock-proof so far as men were concerned. Ten years as owner and manager of the manicuring salon attached to the Hotel St. Evans, Boardwalk, Atlantic City, had bred in her an invaluable understanding of all sorts and conditions of the *genus homo*. Across the gray-carpeted floor of her emporium there trooped daily a veritable army of them, and in a single flash of her competent gray eyes she had them classified and indexed:

The girls stared incredulously as the two went out together.

Man-about-town
Magnate on a short rest cure
Vaudevillian down for a try-out at the Sunday night Bijou Concerts
Cake-eater wasting a few weeks tagging after a socially ambitious mother
Retired Gentleman seeking in the salt-laden wind that blows from the Atlantic a panacea for the ills of a feverish life-time
Literary Lion or Playwright finishing something or other in a room eighteen stories above the roar of the sea
Doctor, Lawyer, Journeyman, Lounge-lizard

—she knew them all. Her mind was a filing cabinet of them, and as she catalogued and tagged them, so she allotted them to her handmaidens.

"Genevieve, will you take the gentleman?"

Or: "Iris? You busy?"

And Genevieve, or Iris, or Sylvia—whichever of the fragrantly named galaxy she chanced to call—knew immediately the kind of job ahead. Genevieve usually got the Retired Gentlemen. There were two reasons for this. Genevieve was, first of all, a slow worker, and only a man with time hanging heavily on his hands could stand fifty minutes of her puttering. Also, the more permanently retired the gentleman, the more willingly he settled back in his chair and prepared to enjoy the picture of Genevieve's buxom blonde prettiness. So that the arrangement worked satisfactorily both ways. For similarly shrewd reasons Sylvia, dark, pert, and piquant, with her hair in a square bang above her eyes, drew the cake-eaters; while it was Gloria who minced her high-heeled way across the floor toward the patrons who carried about them a hint of Thespian endeavors. Gloria's aureole of glinting red curls was enough to make any two-a-dayer wish he had her as the other half of his singing, acting, or dancing team.

When Miss Bonner inclined her head and said briefly, "Elaine!" it meant that one of two distinct types of gentlemen had arrived to have his nails reconditioned—a business man in a great hurry, or a novice embarking for the first time upon the pursuit of impeccable masculine grooming. Elaine, you see, was an expert; a deft, lightning-fast worker who accomplished her task with a minimum of labial effort and a maximum of digital speed. She asked no questions and she volunteered no speech. At Miss Bonner's call she stepped briskly forward, and what you saw was a slender, swaying figure which rose from a pair of shining patent leather pumps like a slim, fresh, Easter lily. Your eye followed the line of that figure upward, from the tips of those patent leather pumps to a pale, alert face bound with two thick, dark braids which went round and round like a crown. A quick nod of that head, a swift businesslike smile which fled almost the same instant it was born, and she settled herself with finger-bowl, brush, file, and clippers. Thereafter you were left to speculate upon the golden flecks that marched across her nose and the faint dawn that broke beneath the creamy pallor of her cheeks.

So now, noting that muscular, compact figure in the doorway, the blatantly new suit, and the creaking yellow

HIS arm supported a pretty girl in a last year's suit, and every now and then—as if the planks of the famous boardwalk were clouds under his feet—he laughed a great, happy laugh and looked at her for approval.

shoes with a shine like a mirror's on them, Miss Ella Bonner's mind, after the first jar, clicked to attention and made its record—First Manicure. Whereupon:

"Elaine!" she called.

And Elaine swayed forward to the summons, nodded her little nod, smiled her little smile, and led the way to a diminutive table laid out like a surgeon's. She led the way, did Elaine, but the gentleman did not follow. He had made one step forward at Miss Bonner's encouraging nod, and that step had brought him out of the doorway. There he froze, and stood rooted, while with a startled, bewildered look in his eyes he stared at the dark, coroneted head in front of him.

"This way, please," Elaine was forced to murmur.

He jerked to life then, and a wave of red burned its way above his collar, inflaming his ears, crimsoning his face, surging up to the roots of his stubborn black hair. All eyes, he followed, and when the cold, aloof, businesslike voice instructed, "Right here, please," he crowded into the narrow chair indicated and sat stiffly, a bull in a china shop.

"Right hand," said Elaine, briskly.

Obediently he extended it, a great, browned, hard, stub-fingered paw, scrupulously clean and smelling suspiciously of yellow soap applied none too gently. A hot hand with a skin like leather, under which played the machinery of whip-cord muscles. A hand that brought with it an emanation of fresh earth and the tang of warm, spring wind through early grass. That hand Elaine took between the cool, white, pink-tipped lengths of her own fingers, and at her touch he started so violently that the infinitesimal table between them shivered and the water in the full finger-bowl overflowed in a great, spreading glob.

"Oh!" he said, in a voice frightened as a boy's.

"That's all right," soothed Elaine. "It happens every day." Quite imperturbably she picked up a towel, mopped up the water, and proceeded calmly with her job. Which ought to tell much about Elaine.

He sat during the rest of the operation completely cowed, his eyes fastened steadily on an imaginary spot just above the dark head in front of him, his face beet-red above the white ring of his collar.

At the end of thirty silent minutes Elaine put down her instruments. From the pocket of her white apron she drew a small pad of checks, wrote upon the top blank $ .75, and pushed the blank, face down, toward him. In the time that it took him to turn it face up, she had picked up her finger-bowl, risen, and moved off across the gray-carpeted floor toward the basin behind the flowered wall screen. When she returned, his chair was empty. Just around the edge of the doorway she caught the flash of disappearing yellow shoes going sqwunch, sqwunch, sqw-unch, and on the little table lay a crisp two-dollar bill.

She gaped. A tip of a dollar and a quarter! With incredulous eyes she stared. And Gloria, she of the glinting red curls, followed her stare.

"Pick it up, kid," she counseled, "and put it where it won't get lost. Your hayseed must've struck oil on his farm. Strange gook to be comin' into this place anyway. But kinda nice lookin', don't y' think, if he'd cool off?"

"I don't know," said Elaine. "I didn't stop to look at him."

"Sufferin' tripe, Elaine! D'y'ever look at any one at all, outside o' your Gilbert? Lemme tell you, girl, if the gentleman ever comes in here again I'm certainly gonna make a try for 'im. For the tip he gives I can show him lots more attention than you can."

"Go to it," Elaine invited her generously, and swayed off across the room in answer to a new summons from Miss Bonner.

The gentleman did come in again. Exactly two days later he loomed once more in the doorway—new suit, creaking yellow shoes, muscles bulging, face flaming red.

Miss Bonner raised her eyebrows. Even in the Hotel St. Evans, Boardwalk, Atlantic City, gentlemen did not have their nails done more often than once a week.

"Yes?" she questioned.

Brazenly, shamelessly, his face crimsoning still deeper, he stuck out his hands.

"Manicure," he said.

Well! Miss Bonner was a business woman. Hers not to question the whys and whims of a customer. Rent on the Boardwalk is no mere trifle and the more often the cash register rings the more musical it sounds. Accordingly, she took stock of her handmaidens, and noticed Gloria was free. To her she nodded.

Eagerly that red-ringleted siren minced her way forward, her face primped in an exultant smile.

The gentleman [*Continued on page 106*]

"I'VE got to go home, end of the week. And I can't see going without you."

A MARRIAGE of Inconvenience

He thought he could judge the Color of a girl's past by the Hue of her Lipstick —*so clever was he!*

By

RAYNER SEELIG

ON A pleasant night in October—which is one of the few pleasant months accorded to dwellers in the cliff-city of New York—Captain Daniel Sheridan was enjoying the solitude of his quiet apartment in a noisy street.

Captain Sheridan was a handsome gentleman of thirty-six, albeit he had a tendency to remark, with a quick grin which illuminated his face, that he was no gentleman at all, and had no use for such antiquated creatures.

His stern, finely-drawn profile was an inheritance, as was the good name Daniel, from a New England mother; the grin and the Sheridan from his intensely lazy, charming, and volatile Virginian father. As for the Captain—that title of rank had been bestowed upon him during the Great War: the latest of many wars in which Daniel Sheridan had been mixed up round and about the globe.

In nineteen-eighteen Captain Sheridan discovered that his lust for adventure had diminished exceedingly. A few months of casual wandering were followed by the definite engagement of an apartment in New York. Here the Captain adjusted himself comfortably to a new scheme of life and a new circle of friends, and here he succeeded in supplementing the small income his mother had left him by the composition of short and somewhat satirical articles.

His military career was ended, but traces of it remained. To the end of his days he carried himself with amazing erectness, so that without quite knowing why, one had the vision of a well made uniform on his tweed-hung shoulders. Also, to the very end, he retained the habit of accepting the challenges of.

SHE knelt, pressing her hands together in supplication.

"You don't remember me," she said mockingly. And for the second time that evening Sheridan's nerves tingled with shock.

fate swiftly and recklessly. This too he would have denied, but not with conviction.

He liked to think of himself as a good fellow, a bit on the quiet, perhaps, but able to enjoy a quart of Scotch or a pretty girl along with the best of 'em. Romantic and imaginative, he was less often bored by solitude than by company. But when one knew a lot of people it was hard to keep out of parties: and, too, they held a challenge, the challenge of the possibility of a new face, of a hand that beckoned, or a dark eye that glimmered provocatively beneath half-lowered lashes . . .

Tonight, for once, he was alone with his favorite books: a volume of Pierre Louÿs, a tattered edition of Burton's translation of "The Arabian Nights" which he had carried from land to land, the "Satirae" of Petronius, the "Memoirs" of Casanova.

He liked the descriptions of strange women, exotic, inviting, utterly feminine women. Decidedly, he thought, one didn't find such women in the world he moved in. It was an unconventional world, a world of reasonably well-bred people who took Bohemianism and auction bridge indiscriminately, by way of making time pass amusingly.

His reflections brought him tonight to the recollection of tomorrow night's party. The Tremaines were giving it, and the Tremaines were rather jolly people who gave rather jolly parties. Still, Sheridan was not pleased. Why had Carol Tremaine chosen to invite him on that particular night? And why had she asked him, of all people, to be nice to Yvette Duer, who had "just been back from France for a few weeks and really didn't know any one, you see"?

Sheridan had known old Miss Duer, Yvette's crotchety aunt, and some five or six years before had met the niece during one of her brief visits to America. Yvette, half French and half American, had been brought up in a convent abroad. At fifteen she had been a terrifying little creature, proper and faded against the gay background of Christmas-time in New York. Although she had sat in a corner with her hands demurely folded, Yvette's eyes had never lost their look of shocked wonder. She had been appallingly on the outside, and the conversation, broad enough—for Miss Duer, although eccentric, was extremely tolerant—must have made the child's stern immobility

rather difficult. Sheridan remembered thinking that she should remain in a convent for life.

Eight months ago Miss Duer had died in an undignified and haphazard manner while scolding an impertinent taxi-driver. Sheridan had heard that Yvette had come back from her convent to live in Miss Duer's old house.

Now, drolly in contrast to the women of his dreams, he recalled Yvette's pale face, pale lips, heavy hair unbecomingly done. A colorless girl, a thoroughly nice girl, who would spoil the convivial atmosphere of the Tremaine's party as only a thoroughly nice girl could.

And he was to make himself agreeable by special request of the hostess. Sheridan groaned. Although he was infinitely tolerant about the habits of his friends he himself observed a strict code, part of which was that one paid no attention to "thoroughly nice" girls unless one expected to propose to them.

Then, with that sudden grin which so surprisingly lighted up his rather grave face, he took up a pencil and underscored a passage in the "Songs of Bilitis," which advised safely:

> Seek not for love among virgins. Love is a difficult art in which young girls are little learned.

Still smiling, he put down the book, finished his port.

Captain Sheridan timed his arrival at the Tremaine's party the following night for exactly twelve. He figured mathematically that Yvette Duer's presence would kill it before midnight. But before he had time to lift the brass knocker and drop it again he knew that mathematics had done him in the eye. The party was in full blast.

Sounds of music—if a victrola accompanied by drum and saxophone be music; sounds of footsteps pad-padding to dance time; sounds of merry voices above the jangle of ice against glass. Carol Tremaine's voice, exceptionally high, but distinct as the tone of some tiny, antique bell, separated itself from the others.

The Tremaine drawing-room had a way of twisting on itself unexpectedly; whenever you thought you had come to the end you turned a corner and found more. Carol had expressed her personality in chalk-blue walls and jade-colored hangings, printed with red birds. Easy chairs of all colors and sizes spotted the floor. All the small tables that were not completely weighted with bottles and glasses held a jumble of musical instruments which were the mute witnesses of Sandy Tremaine's passion for home-made jazz.

Dancing proceeded in the nearest angle of the room.

Sheridan, having got rid of his hat and coat, made his way between the couples, acquaintances who greeted him with a cheerful familiarity, to the section which Carol had named the conversational corner. Here half a dozen of Sheridan's friends were distributed, earnestly destroying and reorganizing the universe by the simple method of conversation. And here he came upon the first unfamiliar figure.

It was a woman, a girl rather, too startling to be utterly beautiful, and yet with a quality of beauty that gave Sheridan an aching half-sense of reminiscence. He had never seen any one who looked even remotely like her, yet she awakened some memory, vague as the memory of a child's dream.

Her features were of a delicate regularity so perfectly balanced as to be almost abnormal. Her nose was short and straight, with delicately molded nostrils of shadowy pink. Her short upper lip was painted with a rouge several shades darker than the smooth flesh. Her eyes were half closed, so that their color was concealed by the mesh of her lashes, but her eyelids were colored a deep smoky blue, in startling contrast to the excessive whiteness of her skin. The face was, indeed, like some fantastic and exquisite mask, perfectly

[*Continued on page 124*]

YVETTE was conscious of the fact that Sheridan was stirred.

A Sparkling Novel that Exposes a Unique Side of New York's Gay Night Clubs

SUMMER

In the Preceding Instalments:

A "SUMMER bachelor" is a husband deserted in New York by a wife who goes vacationing to escape the heat. Broadway's night clubs know the type well.

Among those who frequented the Club Recherché were Martin Cole, Prenny Smith, Beverly Greenway, Professor Blakely, Tony Landor and Dick Otley—who alone flew the banner of the unmarried. Also of this circle were the actress Willowdean French—and Derry Thomas.

Willowdean, whose special admirer was Cole, had recently aroused his jealousy through Blakely, who was directing the hypnotic scene in Cole's latest musical comedy.

Derry was afraid of matrimony. She lived with a sister whose unhappy union had unhinged her mind. So she willingly promised Mr. Ostrander, a dealer in antiques, not to marry for three years, when he made that condition prior to putting her in charge of his affairs while he was in Europe.

Derry thought married men safe playmates. But Beverly Greenway disconcertingly fell in love with her. Then Dick Otley began deliberate pursuit—and finally Tony. Derry's third meeting with Tony at Cole's roof party taught her that she could care for him.

That night she overheard a talk between Willowdean and Blakely revealing the seriousness of their affair, and then a man named Corcoran, known as the champion "bean-spiller" of the town, hailed Tony Landor as "the most uncatchable bachelor in New York." Derry had not known Tony was single. She had hidden all evening from Corcoran, because he had seen her return from a midnight sail with Otley.

"Good-bye, Tony dear," murmured the girl. "It really is

BACHELORS

By WARNER FABIAN
Author of "Flaming Youth"

the end." "It is only the beginning," he replied.

But Corcoran's revelation was as nothing to that of an exquisite woman who joined the party as the guests were about to leave for an early morning picnic in Central Park. She hailed Dick Otley enthusiastically:

"Can it be? It is! My long lost husband that I haven't set eyes on for a week. 'Lo, Dickie Elway!"

CHAPTER XIII

"WHEE-EW!" whispered Tony. "Here's where our Corcoran loses the championship of the silver bean."

Frowning a little in puzzlement, young Mrs. Elway appealed to Smith. "What's wrong, Prenny? Why the ghastly hush? Anybody would think from the way you all look that I was the original Blight who founded East Blightville. Dickie hasn't got another wife present, has he?"

Mary Bennington piped up. She had a natural bent for mischief and didn't like the culprit, anyway. "*We* understood that his name was Otley."

Claire Elway's luminous eyes opened wider. "What did he expect to prove by that?"

Martin Cole chuckled malignantly. "The gay bird stripped of his nom-de-plumage."

"Well, journeys end in lovers' meeting, as Cal said in his presidential message to Congress. I'm afflicted if I've spoiled any one's party, even Dickie's. But, as boy scout to boy scout, Dickie, how come? *Do* you think this alias business is any good outside of a hotel register?" Her voice was lightly mocking.

Martin Cole turned upon Otley—Elway—his least pleasant expression. "Perhaps you would like to address a few words to the audience."

"Lay off him," urged little Sara McIntyre with pretended compunction. "See how pale and wan he is. I

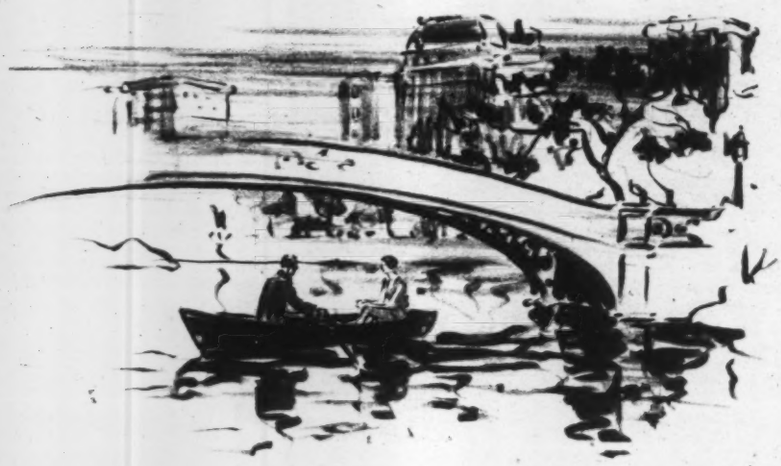
believe he is going to faint a few lengths on the floor."

"Between front collar-button, A, and rear collar-button, B," prescribed Mrs. Elway in a firm, practical voice, "insert one hooker of Scotch, C. It's a sure cure. I've tried it myself. Shall I get you one, Dickie?"

"No, I thank you, Claire. I am quite able to look after myself."

"Then show community spirit," his wife exhorted him, "and say something for the good of the house. Don't stand there looking like the snake's busted garter."

"You appear to be doing quite well, yourself, my dear,"



With a few strong strokes he put them beyond sight of the others.

said he gently. Outwardly he was as self-assured as ever.

"All right. I'll be your defense committee. He must have been drunk," she explained to the others, "or temporarily insane, for he really is a gentleman. Or," she added with sudden inspiration, "in love."

"I think this has gone far enough," stated Elway. "Mr. Cole, I have to thank you for a most interesting evening. I bid you all good night."

He walked behind Derry, saying low for her ears alone: "It's all been a wretched lie but one thing. You know that, don't you?"

Because she was sorry for him and because she did believe him Derry said gently, "Yes." What woman cannot find palliation, forgiveness for any crime or turpitude committed out of love for her fair self!

"Well, that's out of our systems, anyway," remarked the innocent cause of the turmoil. "Now what?"

"Forward to the taxis," commanded Preston Smith.

Derry and Tony slipped away first. She took a hardy resolution to end the evening with one more revelation, which might make it easier to end everything. For Tony, at least.

As they selected their boat at the landing and pushed off, Derry caught sight of Bev Greenway's angry and wretched face, and her conscience burned her. She was giving him a rotten deal. Oh, well; there would be time enough to make it up to him later. For the present, there was Tony, and only Tony. The east was smeared with gold and blue, as with a few strong strokes he put them beyond sight of the others around a bend. The rower put on speed for a short, strong spurt, slipped his oars, and inquired:

"Isn't there room for another person in the stern?"

He had half-risen, was moving with the careful craft of one accustomed to the treacheries of boats, to slip into the seat beside her.

"Wait," she said.

He rested on the intervening cross-seat. "You said that as if you were afraid."

"So I am, but not the way you think. Tony, you heard what that beast Corcoran said about the girl and the man in the sloop?"

"Yes."

"I was the girl."

"So I guessed. I happened to be looking at you when Corcoran was babbling."

"And you know who the man was?"

"Of course."

She saw that he did.

"Right. It was Dick Otley—Elway—I mean. We'd been out all night," she added just to help him think whatever he chose.

"I hope you had a pleasant trip," said he politely.

"Is that all you've got to say?"

"What more do you expect me to say?"

"I thought that you'd think—oh, it doesn't matter," babbled Derry feebly. She felt utterly at a loss. How dared he take it in such a matter-of-fact way! Didn't it matter to him at all what she had done; whether——

"If you expect me to think anything definite," he reasoned, "it's because you're trying to make me believe things about you. I wonder why."

"I'm giving you the facts. They're certain to come out, and then my reputation——"

He smiled. "What do I care about your reputation! It's you I care about."

"Then, if it is, I should think you'd be interested in knowing what kind of girl I am."

"Oh! I see. All right!" His eyes were hard and stringent upon hers, which could not quite endure, now that the moment had come, to meet them. "What kind of girl are you?"

As she had answered Beverly Greenway, she now answered Anthony Landor.

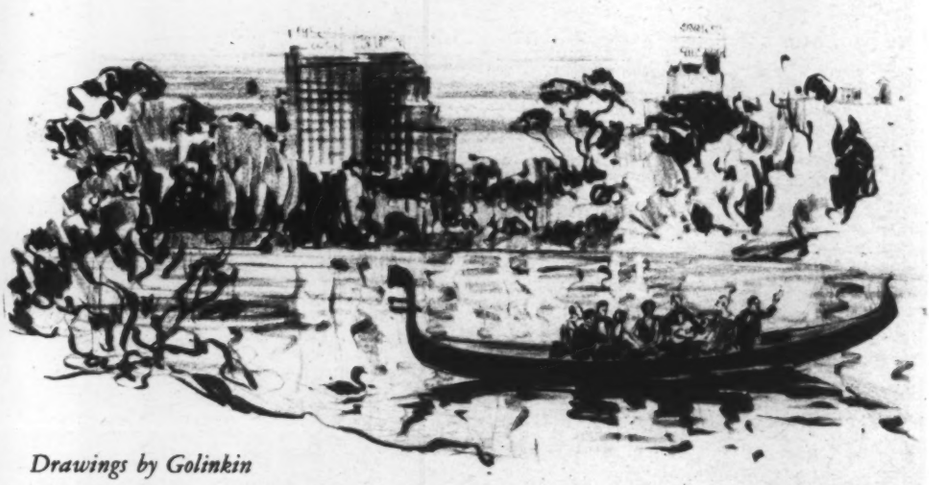
"I'm not ignorant. Whether I'm innocent or not is my affair."

"Whether you are innocent"—he stressed the word to an almost ironic significance—"or not in the usual sense of the word, I don't know. But I know this: whatever you may have done, it hasn't tainted your self-respect."

Ah, that was better than poor, bewildered Bev had been able to do, though Tony knew her so much less.

"And that's the vital thing, you think? You're unusually broad-minded for a man."

"Isn't it? Self-respect is a necessity of life to your



Drawings by Golinkin

The sun was not yet up when the hilarious party chartered a park gondola.

"My husband's never quite responsible when he's in love," Mrs. Elway told Derry. "And he was in love with you."

sort of girl. Can't you see how much I love you, Derry!"

"I'm glad," she murmured.

"And I'm going to marry you."

"No; you're not." There was more panic than determination in her reply. If she saw enough of him, he probably would.

"But I am," he persisted. "Unless you tell me you care for some one else."

She tried another tack. "I couldn't marry you even if I wanted to, and I don't. I'm under a business contract to stay single for—three years."

"Three centuries!" was his indignant come-back. "Why, that's no binding contract. That's what the lawyers call *contra bonos mores.*"

"I don't know what it's contra, but it's a question of my self-respect all right to keep that agreement. So unless you'll solemnly promise never to even try to marry me——"

"I'll promise nothing of the sort."

"Then it's all off and I'm not going to see you any more."

"That's a declaration of war."

"War, if you make it so. Good-bye, my enemy."

She rose carefully as the rowboat grounded, and stepped out, but stood as if waiting for him to say something further. When he had landed he approached her, staring at her long and strangely. "Am I to kiss you, Derry?"

"Yes," she whispered.

A sun-ray thrust its dart down across a rocky bank, flaming and glowing like the embrace to which it put a reluctant end. Voices sounded from around the bend and an irregular splashing.

"Here are the others," murmured the girl. "Good-bye, Tony dear. It really is the end."

"It's only the beginning," he averred.

"Ship ahoy," called Claire Elway nautically, from the stern seat of one of the big park gondolas. "Surrender or die! Bend to the oars, galley slaves."

After all the truants had been rounded up, breakfast followed on the little island. At seven o'clock Claire Elway yawned unaffectedly.

"Children, it's been a grand party and pleased-to-meetcher and all that, but I need slumber. Prenny, you shall take me to a, or an hotel, whichever you prefer, and leave me there. Who's going our way to bear witness to our parting?"

"Bev and I will," volunteered Derry, whereupon that gloomy youth looked a few degrees less suicidal than he had been appearing all the evening.

Claire marched up to Martin Cole and kissed him soundly. "To show you how much I liked the show, and in hopes of being asked again," she explained.

"You've got a permanent bid."

"But I really do not think so well of your little toy lake," she remarked as she settled herself in the rowboat.

"If you know any better lake, go to it," paraphrased the fat critic.

"An idea! In fact, an inspiration. I'll show you a lake

that is a lake, some week-end before long. Will you all come? Of course, you will! Prenny, my seraph, make me a list of their names and addresses—if any. *Au revoir.*"

The rest of the party followed shortly.

In her room, aglow with the full daylight, Derry reflected upon the events which had crowded and crisscrossed the last few hours.

"My bachelor suitor turns out married," she said, "and my married adorer isn't married at all and wants to marry me, and I can't even elope in a sloop without getting caught at it, and—and isn't life gummy in spots! . . . Well, what are *you* winking at?"

For Blakely's crystal globe on the mantel, catching a sun-ray, had flashed it derisively in her eye.

"Some day," remarked Derry, "I'm going to wake up looking at you and never be able to stop. I'd better shut you up."

But, falling asleep, she forgot all about it.

CHAPTER XIV

WILLOWDEAN FRENCH stood looking out of the window in Derry's office. Her pose was languid. Her eyes, a little heavy, a little dimmed of their characteristic brillance and all the more beautiful for that, brooded on a spell in which she was yet bound, as a waking sleeper still moves half in, half out of the charmed dream. If only, thought Derry, sitting at her desk and contemplating her friend's absent look, the dream might last! The actress without turning said abruptly:

"Want a job, Derry?"

"Got all the job I can handle, thank you." She eyed the papers neatly docketed before her.

"You're welcome to mine if you want it."

"Martin might have something to say about that."

"Martin's got a serious hate on me since the roof party."

"Poor Marty! He depends so on you."

"Too much," returned the stage beauty gloomily. "Derry, what do you think about Marty and me? Honestly, now."

"I don't think. I know."

"Oh, everybody 'knows.' And everybody's wrong."

"I know that, too."

"You actually sound as if you did. How?"

"From yourself." Derry was inwardly quaking, but she had been itching to clear her conscience of that accidental eavesdropping, and here was her chance. "When you were talking to—to some one you wouldn't lie to—Blackie," she finished resolutely.

At the name Willowdean turned from the window and came over to Derry. Her eyes became narrow and intent and—brilliant. "When did you hear Blackie and me talking about Marty?"

"At the roof party."

"Not when we were sitting out in the passageway?" half-whispered the other.

"Yes."

"You listened in?"

"We didn't mean to. But there was no way——"

"We? Who's 'we'?"

"Tony Landor and I. You had us cornered."

"You heard everything we said?" Derry nodded. "Then you know about us, Blackie and me." She lifted her small, proudly poised head. "I don't care. It may make things easier later on to have some one I can talk to. I'm not ashamed. But I'm sorry for Marty."

"Tony didn't want me to tell about his being there. He thought you might hold it against him . . . Oh, Deenie, what's going to be the end of it?" cried the girl, terrified at the thought of her friend's [*Continued on page 109*]

Derry, returning slowly to consciousness, saw the concerned faces of Willowdean and Blakely bent over her.

About a Department Store Cinderella — *but this time* it is the Prince who is Stripped of his Finery when the Clock Strikes

"HE AIN'T so slow, that baby," declared Gloria, bringing her lips to a higher degree of orange.

I'm Kissing Your Hand

By CLARA BELLE THOMPSON

"I ADORE handling money," said Molly Willis, with the seriousness of four days' cashiering experience in Nolan's Department Store. "Good money has such a special feel. Ever noticed, Gloria?"

"I'll tell the world," agreed Gloria Dean, as she squinted before the mirror. "It feels like more. Say, this here glass is like the Queen of Sheba's past. You gotta guess it. It stuns me stupid, trying to see how do I look."

"Then move over and you won't be stunned," retorted Molly. "It's my turn." Her gray eyes scanned anxiously the clipped black hair which revealed the tips of two small ears. "Say, Gloria, you cut this too short."

"Me? You talking to me! Listen, when I undertook your head last night it was by special request. I did it just like you said, like mine. See?" She gave a final touch to her short locks and brought her lips to a higher degree of orange.

"Too short," repeated Molly. "I look like a sheared goat. It'll be days before I'm human. I'll scare off trade."

The trade did not promise to be brisk anyway. For summer saw the minimum of business, even in a department as stable as hosiery. And Molly and Gloria breathed twin prayers for a dull day and less heat.

A week before, Mr. Haworth, the superintendent, had sent for Molly.

"Well," he had said, "you're eighteen now and all grown up. Like to try cashiering?"

"Like it! When can I start?"

Mr. Haworth smiled. "Such a hurry! You might slip up now to the classroom and get your instruction right away."

Molly had slipped. But she had learned quickly that there was more to the work than had met the eye. Previously she had thought of bank-notes as either crisp or mussed—one quite as desirable as the other. Now, after

Drawings by Russell Patterson

Gerald was with a slender, vivacious girl who was chattering eagerly.

handling both good and counterfeit bills some hundreds of times, she had developed a touch delicacy that warned her of bad money before she glanced at it. She made change for imaginary sales until she knew instinctively which compartments in her cash drawer held pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, halves, and the various denominations of notes. She learned to recognize Federal notes by the presidential faces they carried. She quickly comprehended the menace of raised notes, even before she was shown a two dollar bill that would have passed muster anywhere as a twenty if the sturdy, identifying face of two dollar Jefferson had not given the lie to the extra cipher. But after hours of instruction, the business seemed to boil down to the use of plain common sense.

Today, the fourth in her new job, she was convinced that the three extra dollars in her pay envelope would be well earned. It was one thing to make change for an understanding instructor, and another at a register harassed by a dozen impatient saleswomen.

"One-fifty out of five." "Three out of ten." "One even." "Change for telephone money, please." "Six even." Molly dutifully repeated the amounts after the saleswomen and handed out the change.

Gloria put the stockings into boxes and tied them with twine. "Helluva day to work," she remarked as she shot nude chiffons into a white container. "Wish me and you and our boy friends were sitting on an ice-cake and floating down the Hudson." She wiped her face with wrapping tissue before applying fresh make-up.

"John and I are going for a 'bus ride tonight," replied Molly. "Look, Gloria! That woman Miss Carruthers is waiting on is melting by pounds!"

Gloria glanced at the customer, a stout, stiffly corseted, expensively dressed woman whose pleasant red face was now furrowed with perspiration. She made her choice, and in a moment Miss Carruthers was saying to Molly: "Seven out of fifty. Customer wants one dollar in small change."

Molly slipped the note into her register and had begun counting the change when she heard a gasp. The customer was sagging heavily against the counter. The next instant Molly saw her sink to the floor.

Two saleswomen had hurried to her before Molly could reach her. She noticed, however, that the woman's fall had loosened an odd-shaped bar pin which now skidded across the floor. She darted forward and picked it up.

"I hope to tell," squealed Gloria. "Emeralds and diamonds! Leave me wear it an hour for luck."

"If anybody wore it, I'd wear it myself. But I'm afraid to have it floating around. Mind taking it up to Mr. Haworth?" She dropped the money and the pin into a small box and put it into Gloria's hand.

"Gimme twenty-four hours' start," said Gloria in a hollow voice. "This city will know me no more. Once she was young and fair, but jools dragged her down."

"They better drag you back, if you want to get through tonight."

Meanwhile the woman had been removed with all celerity to the store hospital. Miss Carruthers had helped lift her to the wheel-chair and had escorted her to the elevator and waiting nurse.

Now Miss Carruthers suddenly remembered the beginning of the transaction. "Jonah's kittens," she gasped. "What'd I do with that fifty?"

Molly quickly reassured her. "You gave it to me and I sent it to Mr. Haworth. What was the woman's name?"

Miss Carruthers consulted her sales' book. "Mrs. Gerald Carter, Seven Pines, near Tarrytown-on-the-Hudson."

Molly copied the information and presently relayed it to her chief. For her the incident was closed.

In the lull that followed her thoughts strayed to John and the cool ride planned for the evening.

For some months now John Maston had been devoting his six feet of lean, young manhood, and his flat but willing pocketbook to the service of little Molly Willis. And Molly hadn't minded. Not at all. More and more often her thoughts dwelt pleasantly on John Maston.

"YOU mean you rub me when I'm naked?" asked the shocked Molly.

IT WAS three mornings later, as she was making change, that Gloria said: "Look, ain't that the dame that threw the fit a coupla days ago?"

Molly looked. "Why, it is," she agreed. "What's the idea?"

The villain re-

turns to the scene of the crime," murmured Gloria in her hollowest voice. "Maybe she wants to settle for floor damage."

The woman was looking about her, as if seeking some one. Presently she approached Molly.

"Are you Miss Molly Willis?" she asked smiling.

"Why—why—yes."

"Then you're the little girl who picked up my pin and took care of my money!"

"Oh, that. It was nothing, Mrs. Carter."

"Nothing, my dear!" She put into Molly's hand a ten dollar bill, which the latter unconsciously verified by its picture of Jackson. "Get yourself something pretty with this."

Molly had taken the money mechanically, but at the words she awoke with a start.

"Oh, no," she protested as she thrust the note back into the reluctant hand of Mrs. Carter. "I can't. It's against store rules to accept rewards, Mrs. Carter. No, really."

"If you can't accept the money, we'll have to do something else." She thought for a moment. Then she said impulsively: "Would you like to spend a week-end with me in the country?"

"Oh—I'd love it!" Molly was wide-eyed. "I'll have to ask my mother, of course, but she just couldn't say no. Could she?"

"It's—it's a mustache, Molly dear, like you want."

"I hope not, Molly. You don't mind my calling you Molly, do you? I'm coming in town on Saturday. You work all afternoon, don't you? Then I'll stop for you at five-thirty next Saturday."

As Mrs. Carter swept away, Gloria pinched Molly. "Call back your girl friend," she commanded. "Tell her that I'm the baby what carried the pin to Mr. Haworth. Or, no, say you got a lady's maid who you never travel without and I'm her."

"Aren't you too thrilled?" gasped the excited Molly, clutching Gloria tightly by the arm.

"Me? What for? Nobody's scattering bank-notes in my path and calling for me when I'm through work."

"Oh, Gloria, what a shame! You did help, too."

"Can that. I was just kidding. I'm naturally tickled simple at this trip. I'll loan you every glad rag I got, Molly, darling. And you'll come back and report how the other half lives to one and all."

THAT night with the aid of John and Gloria there was much planning and excitement in the Willis home.

Mrs. Willis was gratified, though not impressed. "I feel you should meet rich people when you got such opportunity. But don't let a few knives or an extra vegetable turn your head. It's fine is as fine does, Molly girl, and don't you forget it."

"I couldn't, mother, as long as I have you," assured her daughter. "What's wrong now, John?"

"Nothing. Only——"

"He's just off his feed," interposed Gloria helpfully.

She wanted to talk clothes, and to such a conversation John was not an addition.

"No such thing," retorted John. "But I don't see any point to this visit at all. That woman'll act superior. Molly'll feel uncomfortable. I wouldn't let her go, Mrs. Willis."

"No, you wouldn't!" said Molly.

"Listen to the heavy suitor," piped Gloria in quick defense of her chum. "He's scared. No telling how many handsome men his little pocket piece will meet. Handsome and rich. Ain't it hard that the besta friends must part?"

"It wouldn't be hard to part from you," he assured her scornfully. "Anyhow, I was talking to Mrs. Willis."

But Molly stopped the argument for a moment by bringing them all back to the important consideration of what she should take. John's contribution was a Gladstone bag; Gloria had richer, more colorful offerings to make.

"I bought some cerise pyjams," she proffered. "Real silk with red and gold tassels. I was sorta saving them in my hope chest. But you can't hurt them in a coupla nights. Then there's my yellow evening dress. You can have that."

"She can't!" bellowed the proprietory John. "Not that dress! It's too low."

"For heaven's sake, John," snapped Molly. "What do you know about women's clothes? That dress is lovely."

"If he was my boy friend," said Glory to Molly, "I'd sic the dog on him. But suit yourself."

"Children, children," begged Mrs. Willis. "What possesses you all tonight? You [*Continued on page 114*]

The CONTINUITY

By Valentine Williams

MISS JANSON was Crookshank's other right hand. A sort of spare brain lobe. Crookshank, brilliant, masterful, with a temper reputed to be a foot shorter than the temper of any director between New York and the Coast—Crookshank, red-headed, raw-nerved, ruthless, who, when things went wrong, behaved like a lunatic in the flames of hell, always listened to Miss Janson.

Deliberately he left all detail to her. When the soft, unhurried voice spoke in his ear, as, side by side, they sat at the director's table on the set, Crookshank would stop whatever he was doing. The leaping spate of his most furious objurgation would be stemmed on the instant, his frantic appeals to his Creator, his lurid allusions to the torments of the underworld, die away, when Miss Janson coughed the little cough that was her invariable preface to speech.

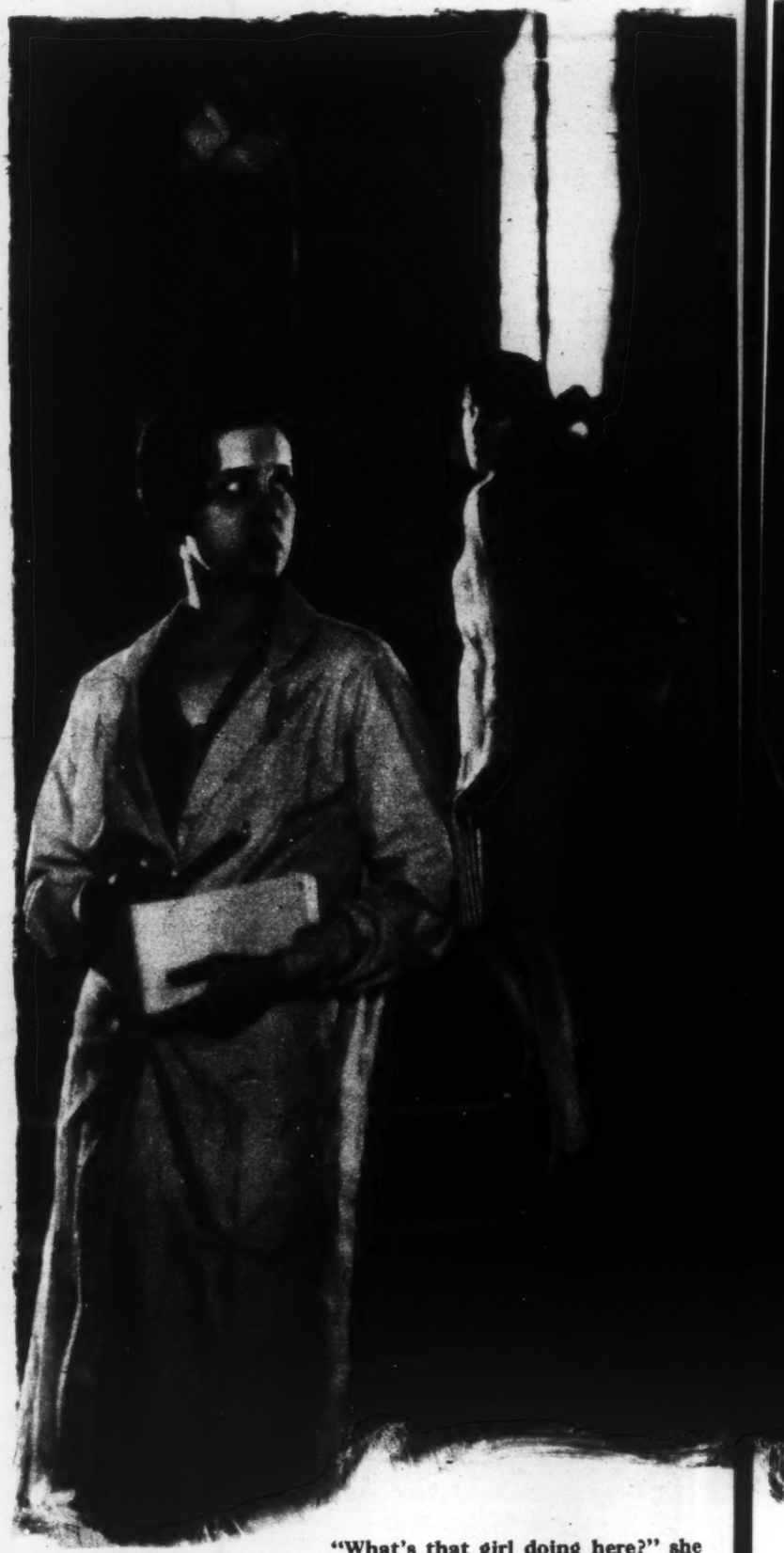
She had the courage of her job. Never would she compound with error. A thing could be only right or wrong; and, did it seem wrong to her, she said so. Said so with that little apologetic air of hers, though the cameras were whirring and the lights sizzling.

"Oh, Mr. Crookshank——"

Clang! The gong would boom, the cameras cease their patter, the lights click off with a brusqueness that stabbed strained eyes. No matter if hundreds of feet of film were wasted. No matter if Dave Heathfield of the impeccable profile were at last warming up to the new picture, or Roma Fane, dumbest of beautiful dumb-bells, beginning to register a dim reflection of what was in the director's mind. No matter if the director himself, his great red fists planted on the table before him, his shade askew over his eyes, were roaring: *"That's good, that's good! Come on now, Roma, let's go! Spill some of that come-hither! Hell, he's your lover, ain't he? Stand still that extra, blast you!"*—when Miss Janson spoke, action died down on the set and Crookshank's flaming poll bent to the sleek brown head at his side. To the players, their yellow faces bathed in the ghastly radiance of the Kliegs, the voice of the continuity girl was like a beam of bright daylight streaming in upon their world of make-believe.

Miss Janson was the continuity girl at Eckstein's. For the benefit of the uninitiated be it explained—but, Lord! is there anything today that people don't understand about motion picture making? Everybody knows that most scenes are shot without reference to their chronological sequence in the story. Obviously, then, somebody in the studio has to see that, throughout a picture, the details tally.

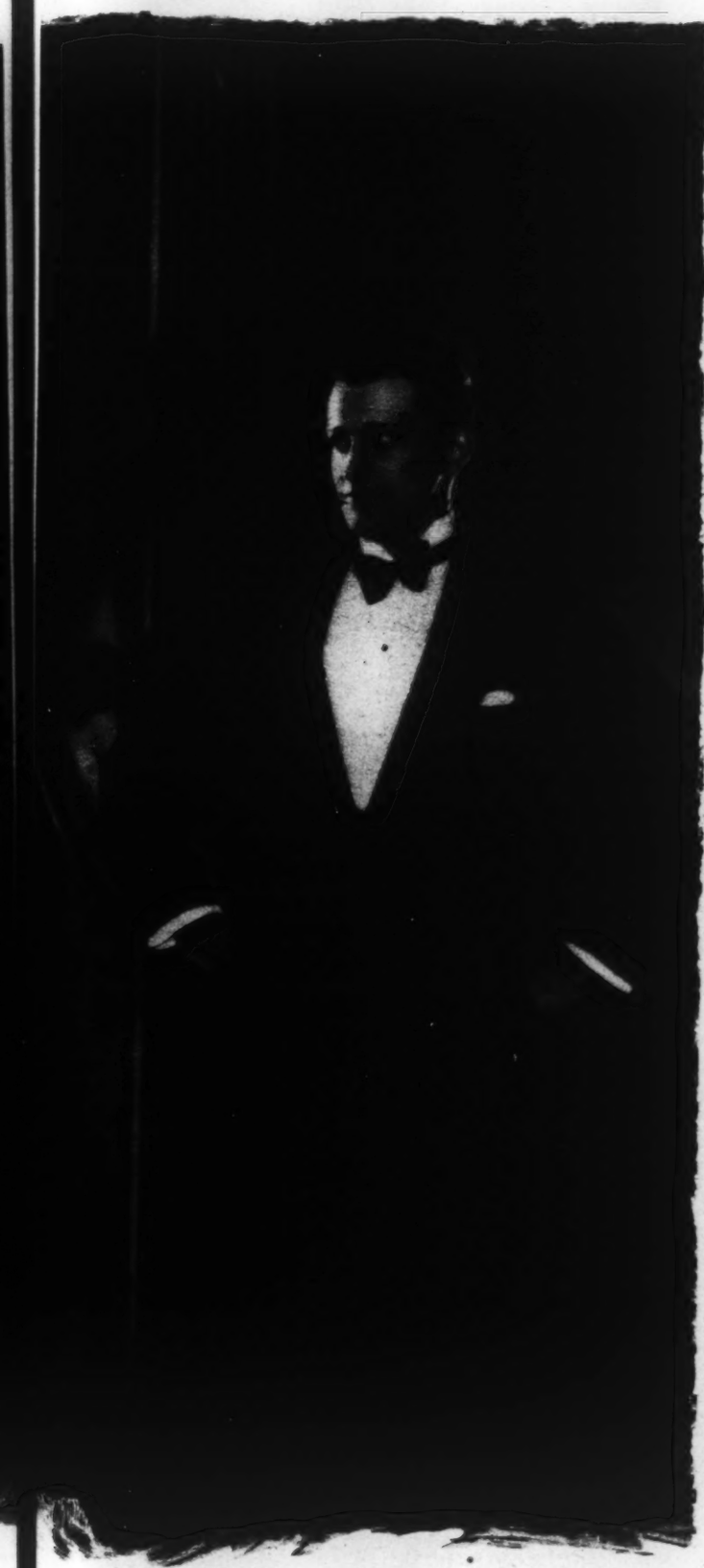
Well, that's where the continuity girl comes in. That was Miss Janson's job. If, for example, Dave Heathfield came on in an outdoor scene with the corner of a handkerchief fashionably protruding from his breast pocket, down would go a note



"What's that girl doing here?" she

GIRL

She Must Know: *What Goes Before and What Comes After* —in Handling the Don Juan Type of Motion Picture Hero



asked. "I have no idea," he rejoined insolently.

in Miss Janson's fat note-book. When, perhaps three days later, Dave appeared in the same clothes in an indoor scene immediately preceding in the story the exterior in question, Miss Janson's glance would flash to that outside pocket, looking for that same handkerchief to emerge at the same angle.

That riding-boots, after a dash through the storm, should be muddy, and muddied in the right places; that a calendar in an office set should not, by a false date, contradict the season of the year; the etiquette of a London club; the proper angle at which to wear a Basque cap—details such as these crowded the pages of Miss Janson's book. Fashion expert, period connoisseur, social authority, property man, all in one, she kept an eye on backgrounds, on accessories of every kind. She was a hound for howlers; the eye of the critic in prospect, as one might say.

She was quiet, and obscure, and self-effacing, with features undistinguished save for dark, intelligent eyes. Impersonal as a cash-register, in the close-knit activities of the little world about her she played no more part than a cash-register plays in the broader humanities of a busy store. In that realm of easy friendships she had no intimates. She was always first on the set; but, the day's work done, she stayed no longer than she needed to don her outdoor clothes, slipping herself out of sight as unostentatiously as she slipped her bulging note-book under its broad elastic band.

To the studio she was just Miss Janson. Hers was a nature that invited or extended no confidences. But if she appeared purposely to ignore the men, who would nod good morning to her much as they nodded good morning to the janitor, she was continually performing small services for the women. The humblest extra seemed to know that for smelling salts, an aspirin tablet, car-fare, one went to Miss Janson. Only towards the little children who sometimes came on the set did her dark eyes soften. For these there were always candies in that plain leather bag of hers.

David Heathfield, Eckstein's latest star acquisition, whose romantic face and immaculate clothes were devastating feminine hearts from one end to the other of the American continent, did not even remark Miss Janson when he started work on his first contract picture at the studio. He was raw to New York's motion picture industry, for his rapid climb to fame had been staged on the Pacific Coast. His brand-new celebrity was as yet unrubbed enough for him to be pleasurably thrilled by the little stir which his daily arrival created at the grey building across the bridges from Manhattan.

If he had eyes for anything it was certainly not for the prim figure perched on the high chair at the director's table. His first glance went inevitably to his own pleasing reflection in the long mirror by the principals' chairs where he was wont to smooth down his hair and touch his lips with red before going on the set. Thereafter his roving eye might swing round the circle of bright faces, which with varying degrees of affected nonchalance so devoutly watched their idol's every movement.

It was the incident of the dressing-gown which first made him aware of Miss Janson's existence. On this morning they were going to shoot a breakfast scene at an English country house. Lavish set, table gay with silver and fruits,

In two strides the director was on the set, bending over the couch where Heathfield lay.

long line of entrée dishes smoking on hot-plates on the sideboard near-by. Heathfield, playing an English Earl, was to be depicted at breakfast with his young and temperamental American wife, Roma Fane. For this scene he had chosen to wear a peculiarly becoming flowered silk dressing-gown which had cost him one hundred and twenty dollars on Fifth Avenue a week before.

Miss Janson objected to the dressing-gown. She was absent when Heathfield, gorgeous as the lilies of the field, went on the set; but the latter did not fail to notice, when she appeared, her brisk aside to Crookshank and the quick frown it brought to the director's eager face.

They were all on the set, going over the scene together: Roma in écru linen, her ropes of pearls showing dead-white against the saffron of her make-up, Crookshank in his shirt-sleeves, brimful with the vigor of a new working day, Wilson, his assistant, with his gray actor's face, Meyerling, the chief camera-man, chewing gum as another man breathes, jaws moving steadily.

On Miss Janson's whisper Crookshank broke off, listened as usual, then took Heathfield apart. For all his irritability the director could be tactful. Twenty years of the stage had taugh him something of the temperament of stars.

"Seems to me, Dave," he observed, "that just a plain business suit, riding-kit if you like, would fit better into the atmosphere of this shot. That robe o' yours certainly is a ringer but don't you think it's just a bit too—well, luxurious?"

Heathfield stiffened. He prided himself on his taste in dress. "The arbiter of elegance," one of the film weeklies had called him. He gave a little, cold laugh.

"I'm playing an English Earl, I believe," he answered without cordiality. "Surely luxury is in the picture?"

Crookshank, who was an autocrat, hated argument. A little more red crept into his florid cheeks.

"Yes, but look here, Dave, you're supposed to be English, see? You want to be very careful not to overdo things. I'll take Roma through her scene while you run up and change." The director flicked a quick glance of interrogation at Miss Janson. "Riding clothes would be fine, I'll say——"

Heathfield caught the questioning look, the continuity girl's mute assent.

"I guess I don't want anybody to advise me about my clothes, Mr. Crookshank," he retorted with some asperity. "This is a tête-à-tête breakfast with my wife, isn't it, with no servants present? I believe I can wear what I like. And this silk—" he mirrored the light on his silk sleeve—"will photograph well, too."

Crookshank flushed up suddenly.

"Dodgast it——" he began. But a small, cool voice forestalled him.

"Oh, Mr. Heathfield, what Mr. Crookshank means is that, as Miss Fane is fully dressed for breakfast, it would be more in your part as a gallant husband and lover to appear fully dressed as well. Don't you think your public would expect you to show the utmost respect toward your wife, the Countess? If you were breakfasting in her boudoir, now, a dressing-gown would be quite in order. But Mr. Eckstein particularly wants this breakfast-room set, so you see——"

Miss Janson paused. David Heathfield assumed a bored expression. His face in repose was extremely good-looking; but he noticed with a twinge of annoyance that Miss Janson was not impressed. Calmly she met his gaze. She knew that she had gained her point; and he knew that she knew it. But he was loth to let her see that so gross an appeal to his vanity could succeed.

"I guess I didn't realize that this dump was supposed to be a breakfast-room," he grumbled, looking about him sullenly and seeking by this adroit slur on a New York production to cover up his retreat. "I'll change into my riding things."

He stalked off the set. Narrowly he scanned the faces of the motley crowd watching from behind the barrier, small-part folk, extras and hangers-on. As he surveyed them through the jaundiced eyes of his wounded self-importance it seemed to him that the spectators were gloating over his discomfiture.

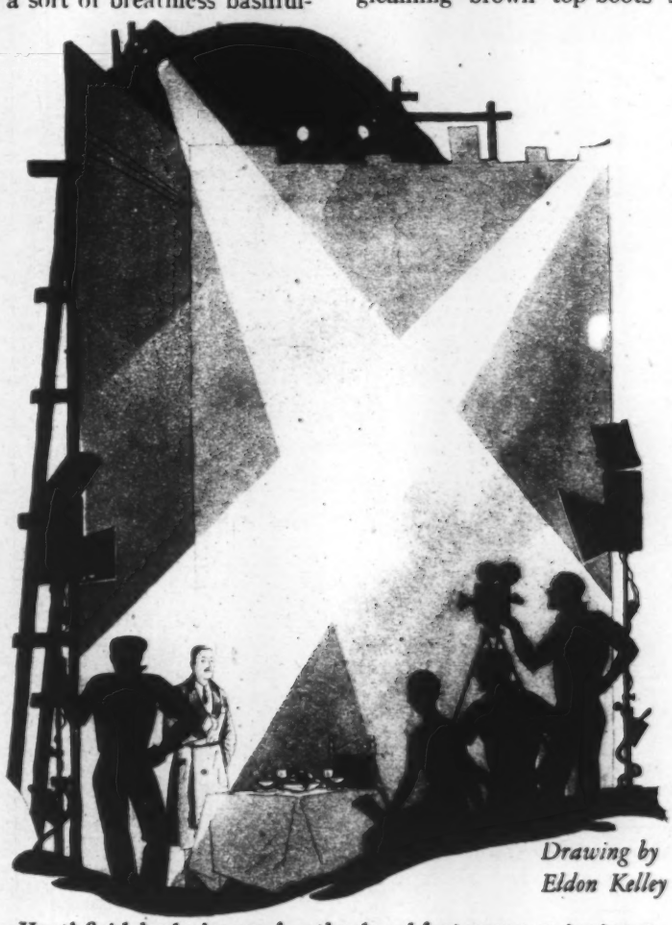
Then Babette caught his eye. Hardly more than a kid she was. But a very sweet kid, Heathfield had told himself the day before when with a sort of breathless bashfulness she had reached her turn in the line of girls who wanted him to sign their autograph books. The smooth round face was set off by a crop of dark-brown curls; the blue eyes, long-fringed, sparkled with temperamental youth; the body was slim and young and beautifully shaped. Hers was a tiny part, one of the exhibition dancers in the inevitable night club scene. Because she was so freshly pretty, because, too, she made not the slightest effort to banish from her eyes her adoration, the star paused as he took her pen and asked the girl her name. In the other books he had scrawled simply, "Sincerely, David Heathfield." But in hers he wrote, after a moment's pause:

Babette
The sweetest girl I've met.
I never shall forget—
Babette!

She had crimsoned with delight when he handed her back her book.

Now as he strode off towards the dressing-rooms, he saw her gazing at him from behind the wooden railing. As their eyes met she gave him a little smile, wistful, half-afraid. And because the idolatry of women was to him as oxygen to other men, the dancer's smile at once restored his self-assurance.

As he reached her, he slowed down purposely, gave her back her smile with a flash of his white teeth. His sleeve brushed her bare arm.



Drawing by Eldon Kelley

Heathfield had chosen for the breakfast scene a gorgeous dressing-gown.

"Don't tell me you're going to take off that marvelous dressing-gown, Mr. Heathfield?" she ventured, and blushed deeply for her daring.

He let his eyes rest on hers in a sort of dreamy inquiry. It was one of his most effective screen glances.

"You like it?" he queried.

"The colors are just exquisite," she declared with enthusiasm. "And it suits you——" As though at a loss for words she moved her head lightly to and fro, at the same time glancing upwards, her hands aflutter—a charming gesture.

"You're fond of color?"

"I simply adore it. That's the only thing I've got against the movies. My, how I wish I could have seen you on the stage, Mr. Heathfield!"

"You know that I used to be on the stage, then?"

She nodded vigorously.

"I believe I've read everything that's ever been printed about you. I could pass an exam in your film parts, I guess."

Good-humoredly he smiled at her.

"I might try you out sometime!" He nodded and went on to his dressing-room to change.

The breakfast scene ultimately disposed of, he approached Miss Janson. There was a momentary lull on the set. Crookshank was raging about the lighting; his sulphuric language rang to the very studio roof. At the director's table the continuity girl was immersed in her note-book. She looked up to find Heathfield at her side. His showy stock and light riding-coat went well with his brown hair and clear blue eyes; the drab Bedford cord breeches and gleaming brown top-boots splendidly set off his clean-cut length of limb.

"Quite an authority on fashions for men, aren't you?" he said, then strove with a laugh to blunt the point of his sarcasm. Out of her grave, rather sad eyes she contemplated him steadily.

"I have to be," she answered.

He had planted his sting. Suddenly his ill-humor evaporated.

"My poor dressing-gown! I thought it looked rather well!"

"It did," she said. "But it was wrong. I should have thought you'd have known better than I how an Englishman dresses."

He would have liked to have taken her remark as a compliment. But something beneath the surface of her voice implied a hidden meaning. Of a sudden he felt uncomfortable.

"Why do you say that?" he demanded bluntly.

"Because you are English. Aren't you?"

He laughed.

"Not any more. I took out my naturalization papers ages ago. As a matter of fact I was born in England though very few people know it. How did you discover it?"

"It's my job to know everything," she told him. "To keep the continuity right one has to know what goes before and what comes after." Her face grew somber. "What goes before," she reiterated, as though speaking to herself, "and what comes [*Continued on page 117*]

HOT SATURDAY

Concluding the Story of a Girl on the Luck

In the Preceding Instalments:

RUTH BRUCK lived in a small Southwestern town, the victim—as she considered herself—of its drabness. At twenty she was already drifting helplessly toward the inevitable spinsterhood that had engulfed her older friend and counselor, Alma Budlong.

Ever since Ruth had lost her first beau, Walt Gibby, she had been out of things. Walt had been the "big man" in high school; and after Eva Niflot won him away from her, Ruth carried as handicap the town's subtle and ugly explanations of how she came to lose him.

Conny Billop was her next failure. She was drawn to Conny because he shared her eagerness to get away from the small town in which they lived. But she incurred Conny's enmity, and now stood in fear of him.

Then she began to play around with John Romer. He was a married man, lately cured at a near-by tuberculosis sanitarium. But now she wanted to forget Romer—forget them all since Wilbur Fadden had come from the East with a letter of introduction to her mother. He was the only child of the wealthy shoe-polish Faddens—her chance, as she saw it, to make her dreams come true. And she knew he was interested in her.

She had planned a picnic in the mountains for this hot Saturday. Just Alma, Doc Jaggers for Alma, her mother and little sister would be along. Wilbur was at his worst in a crowd—shy and embarrassed and awkard—but he was supposed to like outdoor life. And outdoors was where Ruth shone.

During the drive out in the car Wilbur was tongue-tied as usual. But when they had finished supper, and she and Wilbur left the others to climb the mountain, he was more at ease. A storm came up suddenly, making them scramble for shelter. And somehow the adventurousness of it stripped Wilbur of his embarrassment. He kept her hand after helping her up the rocks; held her, experimenting with his first kisses.

But even in her triumph a shiver of apprehension ran through Ruth. Wilbur cared for her now, but what if he should hear the rumors—groundless but cruel—that were circulated about her? At the Willow Springs Pavilion where they were going to dance that evening, they might run into Conny or Walt—or Eva Niflot. And Wilbur was so unsophisticated; if he ever heard the gossip about her, Ruth knew her hopes would be shattered.

CHAPTER VIII

BY SEVEN o'clock the town already shone, moved, and murmured with a quickened life.

Shuffling crowds on the sidewalks thickened and slowed. Motors purred and snorted and met in a dance of light at Third and Center, making of the lone traffic cop a bright hero of frenzied command.

Stores glared at rivals across the way with every light they had. In lunch rooms Mexican track-workers with huge sombreros, and lanky, sunburnt fellows off the cattle ranges and the dry-farms, wolfed pies and sandwiches.

Girls, dressed and powdered for conquest, smiled and giggled as they went by in tight-linked pairs and trios. Men with polished shoes and barbered faces stood on corners, told each other stories, threw back their heads and laughed loudly.

For this is Saturday night, the night of money, love, and liquor.

A quarter of a million dollars have this day been paid

Who Risked a Lifetime's Happiness of a Single Day

By HARVEY FERGUSSON

WITH a risky little slide she brought up before them, laughing, as if she hadn't known herself just where she was going.

into ten thousand pockets and much of it will move again before the night is over.

Money is the blood of the town and this is the night it jumps.

Tomorrow the town will lie pale and tired and rise late to sing the praise of God, but tonight it is flush and happy and belongs to the devil. More things will happen tonight than in all the week besides.

Tonight the town will dance at seven public dance-halls of assorted social grades: from the one in Dogtown where sheep-herders and mechanics, cowboys and brakemen, greaser and gringo, hunk and wop will meet, get full of corn, and fight with brass knucks, quirts, monkey-wrenches and pocket knives over soft-eyed girls from Old Town; to the Pavilion at Willow Springs where sons and daughters of first families will neck and drink discreetly in limousines

between dances. No one will lack a girl if he has a dollar and sticks to his own gang.

Tonight the town will drink and every one who wants will have his liquor. At a barber shop he can get what looks and tastes like pre-war Scotch—but isn't—for ten dollars a quart; and at a garage he can get white mule and native grape brandy for half the price, and it will lift him just as high and let him down no harder.

Tonight the town will gamble. Fifty poker games are starting now and they range from penny-ante, with wives sitting in, to the stern and silent all-night contest with a ten dollar limit in certain back rooms. Behind a locked door over the town's pool-room a crap game rattles and clinks, curses and prays, in a circle of sweating faces round a pile of silver and bills . . . Elderly bridge addicts glare across the dummy in homes deserted by the young.

Tonight the town will make love. It has a thousand dates. Soon after dark it will throw off flying cars in all directions, like yellow sparks from a pinwheel, all seeking to bury themselves in the purple night, looking for dark, quiet places to park with lights out and curtains drawn.

Cars are privacy and escape. Cars run away from home and mother, wife and neighbor, make the world fifty miles wider and easier to hide in. Cars carry young lovers, bathed and powdered, with eager lips, stealthy married men with cuties cuddled beside them, young bucks with girls picked up on Second Street . . . Cars vanish as points of burning red into the purple night . . .

Furtive and violent, the town tonight will play.

Romer. bathed, shaved, and fed, strolled down Center Street, receptive and serene. He would plunge into the current of Saturday night as he had into the river.

At the corner of Third and Center was a lamp-post where questing and idle males foregathered in the evening, without appointment, by communal understanding. The lamp-post this evening already supported the long and languid figure of young Conrad Billop.

Of all the town boys who gathered here Conny was Romer's favorite, because Conny was a failure, beautiful, perfect, and complete, while most of the others were only ragged and unfinished successes. Then, too, Conny, like Romer, was a man of leisure and they naturally came together in search of diversion. Moreover, Conny was rich in experience. In a short life he had been expelled from two schools and had flunked out of a third. He had lost four jobs in three years, and had left home forever twice. He had loved and lost several times, had been in jail once, and frequently drunk.

THEY exchanged greetings and Romer braced the other side of the lamp-post.

"What's doing?" he queried.

"Not a thing . . . Same as always," Conny answered. "This town's a dead one. Y'know what? I think I'm gonna blow pretty soon."

"Yes?" Romer encouraged.

"Yeah. Y'know what I'm gonna do when I get away from this dump?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Come back."

"Come back hell! What'll I come back for?"

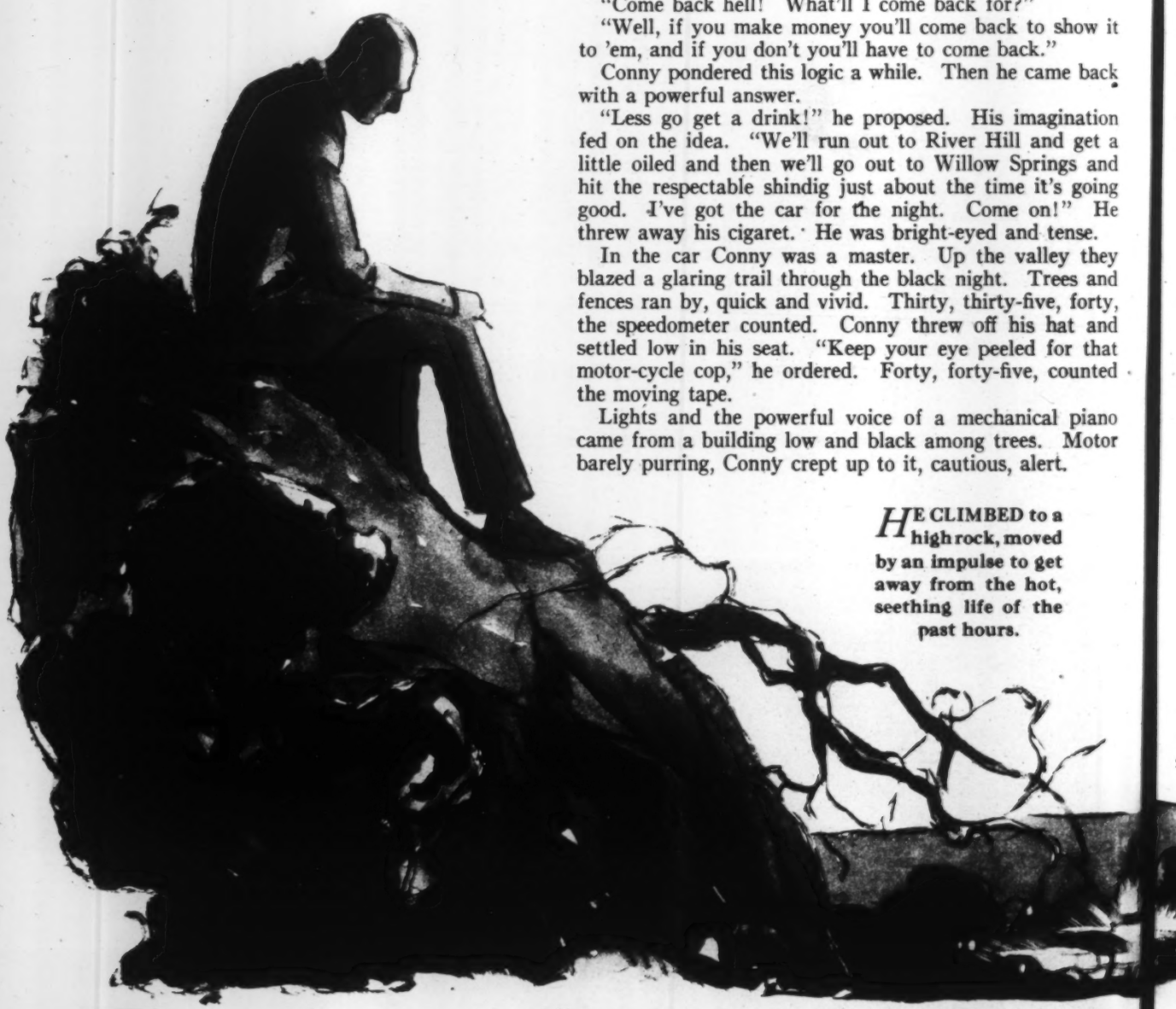
"Well, if you make money you'll come back to show it to 'em, and if you don't you'll have to come back."

Conny pondered this logic a while. Then he came back with a powerful answer.

"Less go get a drink!" he proposed. His imagination fed on the idea. "We'll run out to River Hill and get a little oiled and then we'll go out to Willow Springs and hit the respectable shindig just about the time it's going good. I've got the car for the night. Come on!" He threw away his cigaret. He was bright-eyed and tense.

In the car Conny was a master. Up the valley they blazed a glaring trail through the black night. Trees and fences ran by, quick and vivid. Thirty, thirty-five, forty, the speedometer counted. Conny threw off his hat and settled low in his seat. "Keep your eye peeled for that motor-cycle cop," he ordered. Forty, forty-five, counted the moving tape.

Lights and the powerful voice of a mechanical piano came from a building low and black among trees. Motor barely purring, Conny crept up to it, cautious, alert.



HE CLIMBED to a high rock, moved by an impulse to get away from the hot, seething life of the past hours.

"We'll take a squint through the window," he said. "I don't think anybody'll be there yet . . . Too early. We'll get a couple of highballs and beat it. Don't pay to come here late. You're likely to meet anybody, especially on Saturday night. And it's about due to be raided."

He reconnoitered through a crack in a shutter.

"All clear," he reported. "Not a soul in sight. They just play that pan to show they're open for business."

Around a dance floor tables hid, each behind its own partition. The mechanical piano at one end of the room filled it with a tremor of jazz. Conny turned off the piano and coughed. A short fat man, bald, professionally cordial, emerged quietly from a side door.

"Hello, boys. What'll it be?"

"Couple of ginger ale highballs, Joe, and put a big kick in 'em, will you. I'm lower 'n a duck's stomach tonight."

"I'll make you one that'll knock you right up among the clouds, m' boy. We got some real old-time stuff tonight, just in from Juarez. Bottled-in-bond, ninety-proof. Make a rabbit spit in a bulldog's eye." He vanished. Conny slumped limp again, empty, waiting.

"All this ninety-proof, bottled-in-bond they make right here," he remarked cynically. "It ain't bad stuff, at that. Jim Cutter and I killed a quart of it last Saturday and it never did us a bit of harm . . . We crashed into a greaser-wop dance out on Canyon road about midnight, all lit up. I grabbed off a cute little kid and began to dance with her and a big stiff called me. He was going for a gun, it looked like, when I cracked him on the jaw and knocked him cold. Say, maybe we didn't step out o' there——"

He seemed to come to her out of a remote past, so much emotion had rolled across her consciousness since last night.

The story was interrupted by the arrival of two tall brown glasses. They drank to the accompaniment of Conny's smacks of satisfaction.

Presently Conny slumped low in his seat, narrowed his eyes and wagged his head in a way that foretold an intimate mood.

"Say, I saw our mutual little red-headed friend last Sunday—you know who I mean—with that young Fadden fellow from the East in her car with her."

Romer knew whom he meant painfully well. Conny had seen him with Ruth Bruck and had tried several times

Drawings by Van Werveke

"We'll take a squint through the window first," Conny said. "You're liable to meet anybody here."

to post him about her in accordance with the well-established conventions and ethics of street corner gossip. Romer gathered that Conny was among Ruth's many one-time flames and that he was eager to welcome a friend to that category.

"They tell me she's just about got him roped and hog-tied," Conny went on. "And he's got a million dollars coming to him. Can you beat that? He's connected with the shoe-polish Faddens. Out here for his health or something. Supposed to be spending the summer out at Bill Allerton's dude ranch, but he's in town most of the time, and I guess she's the reason."

Romer squirmed a little, divided between principle and curiosity.

"What sort of fellow is this Fadden?" he inquired.

"One of these nicey-nicey boys," Conny explained. "Too much money and too much mama. Never hit the trail at all. Jim Cutter and Walt Gibby and I had him out in the car one day and Jim started to tell a dirty story. Well sir, little Wilbur blushed like a girl at her first kissing party. He's really a big piece of beef, but you think of him as little because he's so innocent. And who should he fall for but Ruth Bruck, the hard-boiled baby. Say, if he knew what I know about her, I bet it would break his heart."

Conny leaned forward in growing confidence.

"Dumb-Isaac on this," he warned. "It's just between you and me, but one night——"

Romer held up his hand in a silencing gesture.

"Dumb-Isaac yourself," he suggested.

"Why?" Conny was surprised.

"I might get drunk and spill it," Romer explained.

"Well, all right," Conny assented magnanimously. "God knows I don't believe in talking about the girls except just like between you and me, you know, when it won't go any further. Well, anyway, if little Wilbur ever gets an earful about her it sure will spoil the party she's planned. A nice hand-raised boy like that always thinks a girl is just as good as she looks—I know how it is. I was kind of that way myself for a year or so. Until I got to running around with the bunch. That was what wised me up. I'm onto 'em now!"

There was the ferocity of young misogynism in his husky voice.

"None of 'em can put anything over on me now," he added, boastfully; "and a few of 'em have found it out!"

Suddenly he paused, listening. "Car outside," he observed. "Better take a squint."

He moved quickly to the window and was back in half a minute, teeth and eyes shining.

"Goshamighty, there's a whole carful out there. I can't see any face but I can see fat men and a derby. It ain't any of our bunch. Might be the poker party from the Elks and my old man might be in it. They generally come out here to liquor up before they play. Out the back door for us!"

CHAPTER IX

IN THE Springs Pavilion chicken dinners were being served to a quiet few at tables terraced round a dance floor, while summer dusk fell cool and soft among the trees. The Lightning Harmonizers, armed with piano, fiddles and a saxophone, slaughtered "O Sole Mio" to make a waltz. No one danced and they subsided. They would have enough to do later when the Saturday night crowd began to arrive.

The four, having ordered, sat surveying each other under bright light for the first time since they had parted after the picnic to change clothes. Doc had brought Alma in his car and Ruth and Wilbur had come in hers.

Alma had protested against coming but Ruth knew she had really wanted to come and that she would want to stay if she got enough dances. That was the trouble. She probably wouldn't. Men were so scarce.

The Doc was the weakest point in the organization. He was dead tired and looked it. She was sorry for him but her only thought was how to make him want to stay.

"It was awfully nice of you to come, Doc," she thanked him. "I knew you didn't want to and mother wouldn't have let me come without you and Alma. She has a notion this is an awfully wicked place."

"A little wickedness right now is what I need," the Doc answered. "I think I'll sneak out to the car and get a kick of this fellow's white mule. Won't you all join me?"

"Isn't it terrible stuff?" Alma demurred.

"No worse than what we used to get over the bar," the Doc assured her.

Ruth was watching Wilbur. Quiet as ever, he was bright-eyed, and almost natty in his white flannels and grey coat. She could see no trace of shock or objection on his face. He looked interested. He certainly was picking up speed as he went along.

"Let's all have one!" she proposed. "I feel awfully devilish!"

The order was conveyed to the waiter in a low voice, together with a half dollar tip. He nodded gravely, like one receiving news of death. Then they went and sat in the car until four tall highballs were brought.

"Isn't it ridiculous?" Alma exclaimed. "Why don't they bring it to the table? Everybody knows you can get it."

"Serving it out here is what makes it respectable," the Doc explained. "They serve it at the tables in River Hill and that place is a stench. The best people come to this place, so it's got to be different somehow. I remember when I first came to town this was a den of vice too. Really nice women wouldn't even look at the place when they passed by. And now, by golly, there's hardly anywhere a man can go and be sure he won't run into the womenfolks, except to work."

"Well, why shouldn't it be that way?" Alma demanded. "I don't see why women——"

The Doc cut her off with a laugh and a lifted hand.

"If you give me any of that feminist stuff tonight, Alma," he warned, "I'll never buy you another drink as long as I live."

Wilbur took a tentative gulp of his drink, gagged a little, waited a few minutes and then took a larger and easier one. He settled back in his seat and stretched out his legs.

"It's wonderful," he observed, in a high, clear, young voice, "how rapidly alcohol permeates the system."

The Doc laughed heartily. He enjoyed Wilbur.

"It sure is," he agreed. "It's rapid stuff. That's why they call this kind greased lightning . . . Fusel-oil and a sudden wallop . . . Well, let's go back and look for that chicken."

"You look lovely in that lace dress," Alma told Ruth when they were seated again. "And so young. Positively, you don't look more than sixteen. But it seems to me it's too low for a night like this. Aren't you afraid you'll take cold?"

"I never take cold," Ruth answered, looking down complacently over her creamy young bosom.

It *was* low, the lowest thing she had, and she would have made it a little lower if that had been possible. She knew her shoulders and neck were good and she knew Wilbur was keenly aware of them. With triumphant satisfaction she could feel his eyes on her all the time.

People who came after dinner to dance were beginning to arrive now. With a twinge she saw Walt Gibby and Eva Niflot come in and take a table directly across the floor from them. In spite of herself she could not keep from watching them out of the corner of her eye. Walt ordered something and then both of them began looking around.

Their presence filled Ruth with a vague uneasiness, prodded old wounds, stirred half-conscious recollections of all the times she had known herself the prettiest girl present except for Eva. She knew Eva had had it in for her. If ever she got hold of Wilbur, got a chance to talk to him . . . Well, there was no reason why they should meet. But she no longer felt as serenely happy as she had.

The son and daughters of the first families danced at Willow Springs Pavilion.

The next thing she knew Eva had crossed the floor and was bending over Alma in an effusion of affectionate greeting.

"I haven't seen you for ages, dear. I just had to run over for a minute and say hello. No, I can't sit down. Walt is waiting . . . Hello, Ruth. You're looking lovely."

They smiled at each other — the gleaming ferocious smiles of long-standing enmity.

"How do you do, Mr. Fadden." She barely glanced at him as they were introduced, making it perfectly clear that she wasn't at all interested. It was just her dear friend Alma she had come to see. But Wilbur was looking at her and she was standing right in front of him, bending over, so that he got a fine view. And then she was gone, smiling and graceful, leaving them a faint lilac aroma to remember her by . . . She did [*Continued on page 120*]

Napoleon Wasn't the Only One

By Hazel Christie MacDONALD

Drawings by William P. Trent, Jr.

In which A Most Eligible Bachelor Decides that Waterloo Couldn't Have Been as Bad as It was Painted.

BY THE time William Ulysses Haring was three-and-thirty his chief difficulty in life was to bear up under his dinner invitations. He had a person named Muggins, who was a gentleman's gentleman and sole proprietor of a plaster-of-Paris expression. It was Muggins who decided on the teas and receptions and other species of polite bun-fights; William merely attended.

It may occur to you to ask why William was so deucedly popular? Well, it was not because he appeared in the Social Register, or had been in the British Air Force, or was a very handsome dog with a mustache . . . No! It was because Mr. Haring, at three-and-thirty, was the author of four novels which had sold one hundred thousand copies each and which were described as "Romances of the Newer West, Epic in Quality!" To be more explicit:

The heroines were pure as the driven snow—and colder. The heroes went galloping about on horses named Tony, or Rex, or Dynamite. The villains invariably came to a bad end, sometimes being throttled by the hero's bare hands, sometimes being shot by Mexican Pete, whose sister Innocencia had been completely wrecked on page eighteen. Their perpetrator had an income of five figures; he was horribly spoiled and notably bad-mannered, but we shall have to put up with him because he's the second most important person in this story.

Now William had a hated rival named McNulty, and the reason for William's hatred was this: William's novels sold a hundred thousand copies apiece, which was to be expected. But P. C. McNulty's sold a hundred thousand apiece also, which was absurd. Particularly since William spent a month or two or three on his plots. Whereas Mr. McNulty didn't even bother with a plot. He simply wrote eighty thousand words!

On the day after our tale opens behold a man named Quentin 'phoning William, who groaned. Mr. Quentin was William's publisher and wished to remind him that the public was waiting for his next great effort.

"And I haven't an idea in the world what the next great effort is to be about!" groaned William to his man, Muggins.

"I have it, sir!" exclaimed the latter. "We'll go away to Monte Carlo. You always write so nicely at Monte Carlo, sir."

"No," replied William. "We'll go to that place of mine out in New Jersey, next to the orphanage. I haven't been there since I was eighteen." So on Wednesday they were installed in his place in Lindenhurst, New Jersey.

On Thursday William sat in his library composing on his musical keyboard. Like this:

> The cloud on the horizon drew nearer. Sparr Kent fingered his Colt speculatively. Then . . . before the man hidden in the sage-brush had time to think . . . Zing! The Colt spat death!

William stopped. "Muggins!" he roared. "What—what in the devil is that frightful noise?"

"That?" asked Muggins. "That's a girl laughing, sir. One of the orphans, I presume. Rather pleasant, don't you think, sir?"

"Pleasant!" shouted William. *"Pleasant!* Yesterday that girl ruined the afternoon for me. Today she has ruined the morning!"

"I suppose there is nothing we can do about it, sir?"

"Oh, isn't there though?" said William. "Well you may not know it, Muggins, but my father built that orphanage and endowed it." He put on his hat and grasped his cane. In nine minutes he was installed in the reception room of the orphanage.

"Dear me, dear me," said Miss Beasley, the superintendent, who had known William since he was a small gingersnap. "And to think you have written all those wonderful books." William remained cold.

"I'm writing another," he said. "But it will never be done. Because whenever I try to concentrate I am disturbed by the noise made by one of your little children."

"Is it the children at the swings, Mr. Haring?"

"No," replied William. "It sounds like water running over stones . . . or a little brook in the woods, perhaps. Muggins says it is a girl laughing. Well, it may be. I can only add that it is also intensely annoying."

"Really?" exclaimed Miss Beasley. "That must be Carol Johnson. She sits in the tree around from your library window, reading P. C. McNulty. No doubt you have laughed yourself over P. C. McNulty."

"Not—not recently!" answered William, who was having trouble with his breathing. Miss Beasley regarded him.

"Why, I do believe—that you still dislike Carol John-

WHENEVER he tried to do any writing she would be sitting in the tree outside his library window, laughing or singing. It annoyed William.

Having made sure his footing he caught Carol in his arms.

Then he worked his way down slowly into Stygian blackness.

son," she said. William showed indignant astonishment.

"I?" he exclaimed. "But I don't even know the girl!" And then, of course, he remembered her perfectly. "Not—not—the little orphan I pulled out of the pond fifteen years ago, only to find she hadn't been drowning at all?"

"The same," said Miss Beasley. "You know she teaches here now. Poor child. She has never had any other home but the orphanage."

William twiddled his beautiful mustache indifferently. "Then may I assume that you will—will—ask her to stay away from the neighborhood of the room where I work?"

"No," said Miss Beasley, "I won't. It should be simpler for you to work in another part of the house I should think."

"But I can't!" protested William, outraged. "For years I've been working in a room with a western exposure, shaded by trees. It would be absurd to ask me to change now."

"Well, it would be just as absurd to ask Carol to sit anywhere else," Miss Beasley informed him. "She's been sitting there for years. Still if you care to take it up with her personally——"

"Heavens!" exclaimed William. "I don't want to see the girl!"

"In that case," said Miss Beasley, as she rose, "I might mention that Carol is a comparatively slow reader. It will probably be two weeks before she finishes this particular book." And she was grinning as she watched the author of four best sellers stalk down the drive.

Meanwhile William was filled with bitter reflections. Eighteen years old he had been when he pulled Carol Johnson out of the pond. And he had honestly believed he was saving her life. He still remembered his astonishment when she continued to scream.

"But Great Scott!" he had exclaimed. "Don't you know you were drowning?"

"I wuzn't!" howled the little ingrate. "I wuzn't drownin'! I wuz swimmin'!" And then she had scratched William on the cheek, kicked him in the shins, and gone away.

But what had hurt most was that there had been a witness to his degradation, a chap about his own age who had stood laughing pleasantly at the whole proceeding. Luckily William had never had to see either of them again.

That had been the summer his father died, and he and his mother had never gone back to the country house.

And now after fifteen years here the girl was, sitting outside William's window, and ruining his future. Then, suddenly, he had an idea. He climbed into his roadster and drove all the way to New York on the strength of it.

On the north side of Washington Square lived just the person he wanted. She was Mrs. Jan Webster Brinckerhof and such a complete aristocrat that she could afford to do anything—and usually did. William kissed her—it's all right, she was almost seventy.

"I've got myself into the deuce of a jam," he said. "I'm out at the place in New Jersey, next to the orphanage. But I find I can't do a stroke of work because—because—well there's a girl next door—at the orphanage, you understand——"

"You don't mean, William," said Mrs. Brinckerhof, eating a chocolate, "that you've at last permitted yourself to fall in love?"

"In love? Haha!" exclaimed William. "That's good! Do you know what this girl does? She sits in a tree, reading and laughing and sometimes singing! Have you ever heard anything to equal it?"

"She undoubtedly wants to improve her mind," said Mrs. Brinckerhof.

"But you don't get me," groaned William. "The tree she sits in is outside my window, and the book she reads is by that fool P. C. McNulty! And every time she laughs at anything by P. C. McNulty I forget what I was going to write next! I went to the superintendent about it, but she said she did not care to hurt the girl's feelings. What about *my* feelings? What about my public? Well, anyway, I've come to you for help!"

"Me!" said Mrs. Brinckerhof. "Do you expect me to go out and muzzle the girl, William?"

"No," returned William. "I want you to give her a job as your secretary! For it is obvious that the moment she is in New York, she ceases to be in New Jersey! Am I right?"

"But I have a secretary," said Mrs. Brinckerhof. "I've just remembered."

"We'll put him into the Nicaraguan Smelting Company at a better salary," said William, easily. Mrs. Brinckerhof laughed.

"Is she—pretty?" she asked.

"Do you suppose I've so far forgotten myself as to look at her?" demanded William. There was a silence. Mrs. Brinckerhof broke it.

"Once upon a time," she said evenly, "there was a young man named Napoleon. And for some reason, he thought he could have things all his own way. And he did, too, until—until Waterloo!"

"Yes?" asked William. And he was laughing.

"Yes," returned his friend. "And some day you're going to meet some one who will teach you—that Napoleon wasn't the only one!"

"Humph!" said William.

The next morning Mrs. Brinckerhof arrived out at Lindenhurst and explained to Miss Beasley that Mr. Haring had recommended a certain young lady as having secretarial possibilities. And so forth. Miss Beasley sat bathed in anger.

But on the other hand she realized the splendor of the opportunity. So she sighed and sent a small male orphan named Robert to find Miss Johnson. Miss Beasley wondered if Mrs. Brinckerhof knew how William disliked Carol; Mrs. Brinckerhof wondered if Miss Beasley knew.

And then the door opened to admit the young lady whom William had once hauled out of a pond!

INASMUCH as Carol had been gone two days it was to be assumed that William would be able to work. In fact William himself had assumed it, and had written to Mrs. Brinckerhof about it.

My dear Lady:

I cannot begin to express my gratitude to you for taking away Miss Johnson and her ill-advised levity.

I am glad you appear to like the girl, but you'll forgive me if I add that I don't see how it's possible.

As ever,

WILLIAM.

But by the time this noble message was received by Mrs. Brinckerhof, William was wondering why he had sent it.

"I don't see what it is," he said to Muggins. "I've got rid of that girl—there's nothing apparently to hold me back." The telephone rang. It was Mrs. Brinckerhof, solicitous but gay.

"William darling," she cried, "how's the novel going?"

"As well as can be expected," returned William with dignity. But for some reason Mrs. Brinckerhof seemed to consider this very funny.

"Tell her you may have to go to Monte Carlo," said Muggins.

So William told her. "What!" shrieked Mrs. Brinckerhof. "Do you mean to say you got me to go to the trouble I did, only to have you depart two days afterward for the end of the earth?"

"But I'm not going till the last of the week," said William. "And you don't think I'd go unless it was necessary, do you?"

"Nothing would astonish me!" remarked Mrs. Brinckerhof. "You're such a featherhead!" And she hung up.

Then she turned around. Carol Johnson had just come into the room. She was as high as a man's heart and her hair was the color of sunshine on corn. You couldn't possibly imagine her sitting in a tree. Or kicking William on the shins.

"I was just telephoning Mr. Haring," said Mrs. Brinckerhof.

"Oh," said Carol very softly, "do you think I might write and thank him?"

"Thank him? For what?" asked Mrs. Brinckerhof.

"Why, for everything," said the girl. "For this lovely home, and for you."

"Heavens!" gasped the [*Continued on page 76*]

THE LITTLE BAGGAGE

It's not a safe game at best—to whisper soft promises to two men at the same time. It was doubly dangerous back in the old days on the Panhandle, when suitors were the swaggering hide hunters who followed the buffalo across Texas.

This story of a girl who kindled a feud which raged the length and breadth of the table-lands is written by that popular creator of western stories

FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT

Coming in the October McCLURE'S

"Byron was wrong. Love is *not* 'woman's whole existence.' "

May a Dead Love

By Mrs. M.

By The Love

TWO authorities in sociological common sense —a woman and a man of standing in their professions—have been commissioned by McClure's to study each month a single problem selected from those submitted by readers. These experts are unknown to each other, so that the woman's side of the question may be contrasted impartially with the man's. As evidence of good faith, all letters sent to McClure's, 119 West 40th Street, New York, must bear the writer's name and address. Under no circumstances, however, will names be disclosed, even to the two principals.

Dear Madam and Sir:

I am a doctor's wife, thirty-five years old, and if I say that I am good-looking and slender and smartly dressed above the average in the small city where we live, I hope you'll understand it's only to make my problem clearer to you. We've been married thirteen years, and have two boys, eleven and seven, and a girl of nine. Managing my house without a servant has been my game rather than my work for all these years, and we have a pretty home, and good meals. Never a penny of debt, for I pay cash as I go. Doctor has a fine practice, and gives me $50 a week for all expenses, and that's enough. Last year I added more than $400 to this, raising broilers, and making cakes and bibs, etc., for a woman's exchange.

Doctor's offices are on the lower floor of a business building two blocks away. Three years ago he got so strange and surly that I thought he had fallen in love with the nurse who helps him, and sometimes I still think they love each other, though there is no open proof of it. At about that time he put a bed up in his

Dear Doctor's Wife:

The first thing I want to say to you is just this: Life is bigger than any one of its loves. Byron was wrong. Love —even the love between man and woman—is *not* "woman's whole existence". Life can be picked up, put together, lived successfully and nobly, after such love is ended.

Brave women over and over have proved this to be so. You can be as brave, if you must be. And perhaps you must. Your husband's estrangement—a bitter, unjust, terribly painful thing to bear—is still not so important as what you are going to make of the future for yourself and your children.

Not that I fail to sympathize with your present unhappiness. It is so horribly unfair. When a shrew or a disloyal wife loses her husband's love (not that she always does!) I think, "But what could she expect!" When the same situation confronts an attractive, intelligent, efficient, devoted wife and mother like yourself, I resent the irrationality of nature's cruelties.

Will it not be a little easier if you so regard this personal tragedy of yours? Try to see it as an earthquake or a tidal wave or even a shipwreck—a painful catastrophe, in which you are involved but for which you are not responsible. *Because I do not believe you are.* I judge not only from your letter, which seems to show that your husband has no just reason for his desertion, but from other marriages I have observed.

Sometimes a husband, sometimes a wife, simply stops caring. As the colored lady humorously explained, when she asked the judge for her divorce, "I jus' na'chally done los' my taste fo' that man!" It isn't a funny situation to the forsaken. There are always some to blame them, as you say you are being blamed. Often they add to their torture by blaming themselves.

I beg of you not to do that. There are antipathies of sex which go below the conscious mind and for which the unlucky individual inspiring them is in no conscious sense at fault. Perhaps the scientific investigator of the subconscious may learn some day how to deal with them. Meanwhile, it remains the fact that, even for a good and charming wife like yourself, her husband's love may die utterly and without apparent cause. Nor can a dead love be argued into life. When a man reaches the point where intimate association with his wife repels him, there is nothing which she or anyone else can say to make him feel differently. But already you [*Continued on page 102*]

"There are born bachelors who live for their selfish selves only."

Be Coaxed into Life?

Doctors

By Mr. H.

back office, saying he liked sometimes to rest between calls. Two weeks later he took to sleeping there, and he has not slept at home one night since.

Neighbors don't know what to make of it, for although I put as good a face on it as I could, naturally the children talked some. Sometimes he comes home to discuss a little business, or to get his linen (but usually he sends a boy Tuesdays for that), and then he is nice enough, except when I question or reproach him. Then he gets terribly ugly.

In the old days I sometimes saw him in this mood, but I could always coax him out of it. Now he simply shuts up like a clam. Almost everyone thinks that there is something going on between him and the nurse, but she is a sweet girl, and a church member, and now and then she will come in to call on me as if everything was all right.

Our clergyman went to see George, and so did my mother, and he was polite to both of them, and spoke nicely of me; he said there was no quarrel and that "nobody ever could quarrel with Alice." He has his meals at a boarding-house next door to his office, where his nurse and her mother live, but there are about twenty boarders, so there is nothing strange in that.

At first everyone critized him, but lately a good many seem to feel that maybe there was something wrong on my side, and that he couldn't stand it, and that makes me mad—it is so unjust. When he first went away I used to go into his office and try to reason with him, but lately he always sees that there is someone else present when I'm there. When I talk he just says "Please don't begin all that again!"

It makes me feel dreadful that the home I loved so is all broken up. I don't know what to do. I simply cry my eyes out. I have seen a lawyer, and he tells me that there is nothing I can do except to go to some other State—it is hard to get a divorce here—and divorce him.

Have you anything to suggest?

A. L.

My dear Mrs. L:

Your letter is a very disturbing one, for it shows me that, however the facts are turned about, you are in a most serious situation. It looks as if there is no escape from the necessity of your having to face changes in your life which are exceedingly trying for a woman.

But it has often been a revelation to me what can be accomplished by clearing up the sad confusion of mind which inevitably comes to one when marriage, for some seemingly unaccountable reason, goes all awry; when one puzzles and puzzles to guess what *can* be the matter, or what is the best thing to do. The menace to your happiness through your husband's conduct is a terrible thing, and you must not try to deal with it alone and unaided.

As you and your husband have no serious personal differences to keep you apart, let us eliminate the idea that he stays away because he has some deep grievance against you which might make him voluntarily leave his home. If you two had quarreled about something and were unable to make up your minds to live together without continuous family rows, that would of course account for his going away to live at his office. A man will do anything for peace.

But evidently that is not his real reason.

There are only two possible explanations left.

Let us take the first. There are men, more of them than the world generally suspects, who are temperamentally unsuited to family life. These are the born bachelors, who like to live for their selfish selves only and to have nobody—especially, no woman—bother them. Such pitiable individuals voluntarily deny themselves the pleasures of a full life, the true joy of sharing life with another, the happy responsibilities of children and the home,—because they aren't big enough and brave enough to go through with it.

Is your husband that kind of man? If he is, then he ought not to have married, and his present actions are an attempt to get back to the state normal for him.

I confess I haven't a high opinion of the hermit type of husband, and I also want to say that I never knew one of them who was the sort of man your husband seems to be. His success as a doctor, the fine practice he has built up,—that means kindly, unselfish and helpful work on his part. The description of your home and yourself and your three children shows that he has a family of which any man may be justly proud. He must [*Continued on page 103*]

surprised old lady. Was the girl crazy!

"Besides," went on Carol, "I cut a picture of him out of the paper, and his eyes look so sincere and splendid. And yet gentle——"

"Mr. Haring," observed Mrs. Brinckerhof, "is vain, empty-headed, and worthless." Carol shook her yellow pate.

"You never could make me believe that," she said.

"Carol," said Mrs. Brinckerhof with difficulty, "I'm about to be very cruel. But not to William. Go up in my desk and bring me the letter in the left-hand pigeonhole." Carol went upstairs and returned with the letter.

"READ it," said the older woman. Carol read it. There was a pause.

"You used to sit outside in the apple-tree and laugh over a book," said Mrs. Brinckerhof. "And that annoyed William. That is why he got you a position." She stopped; there were tears on Carol's cheeks. "My dear, you have been on the point of falling in love with William. And so many ladies have done that that he is merely bored when it occurs."

"I!" exclaimed Carol. "But I hate him!"

"That," said Mrs. Brinckerhof, "is as good a frame of mind as any . . . for teaching William a lesson. The only thing is, he is going to Monte Carlo at the end of the week."

"Well, we can hardly teach him a lesson in a week," said Carol. "Especially as he is in New Jersey, and we're in New York."

"But we might keep him from going to Monte Carlo," said Mrs. Brinckerhof. "And you might cease to be in New York by removing yourself to New Jersey—to the orphanage, for instance."

"Heavens!" said Carol. But Mrs. Brinckerhof was laughing.

"It stands to reason that if he thinks you're here," she remarked, "he's not going to suspect you're there. But of course we must get another Miss Johnson—or some one who will pass for Miss Johnson, as it were. And now about William and the lesson. The most terrible thing I can think of would be for you to get William to fall in love with you."

"Have you forgotten how I hate him?" asked Carol.

"That's just the point!" said Mrs. Brinckerhof. "You get him to fall in love with you, and then you refuse him. Just think of it. You *refuse* him! Why, it would kill the man."

"I hope so," said Carol nobly. And she rose. "I'm going up to take his picture down off the wall and tear it up."

"Oh, you mustn't," advised Mrs. Brinckerhof. "You should really keep it and look at it every day, to remind you of how you dislike him—— And take the letter, too, to strengthen yourself when you feel weak."

Then they embarked on the search for a Miss Johnson. But the best they could do was a Miss Billings, so they took her.

Came the next morning and William, out in Lindenhurst, was full of grilled sausages, hot cakes, and coffee. But he was disconsolate.

The bell rang, and because Muggins and the housekeeper were away William went to the door himself—crossly.

"Oh!" he exclaimed when he had opened the door, for he was looking at the prettiest girl.

"Good morning," said the maiden. "Have you seen anything of a kitten over here?" William goggled. Those eyes! Them eyelashes!

"You know," said the girl, "a kitten. A small cat. I'm afraid she's lost!"

"Maybe she's just staying out," said William, brilliantly. The girl shook her lovely head.

"Not Heliotrope," she said, proudly. Then she grew sad. "She's gone, I'm afraid—but thank you for taking such an interest in her." She turned away.

"Wait a moment," exclaimed William. "Suppose I did find her? Where can I reach you?"

"I teach at the orphanage," said the girl. "You can find me in the Administration Building—the corner front room on the second floor." She allowed a wisp of smile to seep out into the air and linger goldenly and then she was gone. William leaned weakly against the door jamb. Was there anything peculiar about this? No! Many a man who is steady on his feet and has been for years, takes an awful header on a banana peel when he is least expecting it.

That afternoon he saw the girl again. Purely accidentally, of course, since he hadn't been waiting more than a little over an hour. He caught up with her on the road leading to the village.

"Good afternoon," said Mr. Haring. The girl regarded him. It was evident that she knew she had seen him some place. But where?

"I live in the house where you inquired after your cat," said William, who was evidently off his English under love's bright influence.

"Oh, of course," said the girl. "I knew I had seen you before." She walked on.

"Perhaps I should introduce myself," said William. "I am William Haring—the novelist." The girl seemed embarrassed.

"I suppose I should know you," she said. "But I really read no new fiction at all. Most of it is so futile!"

"Futile!" roared William. Then he smiled. "I suppose you read nothing but 'The Orphans' Weekly Gazette'?"

The girl turned her wonderful eyes on him and William had the sensation of falling headlong into the sky.

"There is no such thing as 'The Orphans' Weekly Gazette'," said the girl, evenly. "But if there were, I'd read it. Because I've been an orphan ever since I can remember." And you can imagine Mr. Haring then! But he persisted.

"I've always been interested in orphans," he said. "In fact I'm on the board of the Lindenhurst Orphanage where you teach. I'm one of the vice-chairmen."

"I know," said the girl. "You're the vice-chairman that never comes!" William found himself not caring for this remark. He sought vainly for a reply.

In the meantime they had come to the village. The girl bowed a little to William, thereby remaining a perfect lady to the last, and disappeared into a shop; leaving one of America's most eminent novelists swearing charmingly under his mustache.

In about an hour, however, he could think of her without bitterness. "I'll buy her a kitten to take the place of Heliotrope!" he thought. "That will melt the wench!"

So the next morning he went to New York. And called on Mrs. Brinckerhof with the kitten.

"Gracious," said the former. "What is that howling out in the hall?"

"A kitten," said William. "I'm—I'm buying it for some one."

"It's quite the loudest animal I've ever heard in my life," remarked Mrs. Brinckerhof. "And I suppose I might ask why you came in to call on me this morning?"

"Because you were cross with me," said William adorably. "And I can't bear to have you cross with me."

"Get away from me," ordered Mrs. Brinckerhof. "You're positively disgusting." And then she said, "Sh—here's Miss Johnson." And, as William blinked, a young woman entered the room.

She was possibly about twenty-three or four; she wore thick glasses and arch-supports; and there was nothing about her which would lead a man to take liberties with her. William blinked again.

"Take this list for the dinner, please, Miss Johnson," said Mrs. Brinckerhof. "And then if you wish you may have the rest of the day off." The nightmare smiled.

"Oh, thank you, my dear Mrs. Brinckerhof," she said, and she made her exit on the sturdy arch supports. William swallowed.

"Ye gods!" he said, "I—I saw her once as a child, you know. But I had no idea she'd ever grow up into anything as bad as this!"

AT WHICH William kissed Mrs. Brinckerhof and clattered down the steps with the kitten, and into the roadster. Then off for Lindenhurst.

After luncheon he took the kitten in its hamper over to the orphanage. The male orphan named Robert was on deck.

"Take this kitten up to the young lady who lives in the corner front on the second floor," said William. "The one with the golden hair and the beautiful eyes. And there'll be something waiting for you when you come back."

Robert departed. He was back so fast he must have passed himself somewhere on the stairs.

"She says thank you, but nothing can ever take the place of Heliotrope," said Robert. William glared.

"What!" he ejaculated. "Listen, what's her name?" Robert blushed painfully. He had been warned.

"I—I never can remember," he said.

"Could you remember for a fiver?" asked William.

"Not even for a quarter I couldn't remember!" he said staunchly. And then

he added, "Please, could I have the kitten? I've never had no kitten and I'd name it Henry." His eyes were full of tears.

"You can name it Henry if you wish," said William who was almost breaking down himself. "But I don't think it's that kind of cat!" He went out sadly.

At home Muggins was radiant. "We can have the suite with the early American furniture, sir," he said. "I've just found out."

"Furniture!" exclaimed William. "Are we moving?" Muggins looked pained.

"Have you forgotten, sir," he asked, "that we are sailing for Monte Carlo in four days? On the *Cameronia*, sir?"

"I suggest that we postpone our departure," William said. And then he went out and turned the nose of the roadster toward the village.

He was hoping to meet the girl. But he got all the way to town and didn't. At a stuffy little establishment he bought a pipe and tobacco. There was a young chap leaning across the counter as William gave his money to the moldering proprietor; William had an odd impression of having seen him before. Good-looking fellow—where was it William had met him?

He gave it up; and had embarked for home when he met the girl. He stopped the car and got out.

"Listen, will you go for a ride with me tonight?" asked William. The girl meditated.

"I don't believe I ought to," she told him.

"Oh, I'll ask Miss Beasley if that's what's worrying you," offered William. "We're the greatest of friends."

"Oh, I don't mean that," said the girl. "I mean I ought not to go because I don't want to. And we ought never to do those things we don't want to, ought we?" William looked at her and a slow flush rose in his handsome face.

"How you must dislike me," he said. The girl showed surprise.

"But I don't!" she said gravely. "I merely find you—less interesting than you seem to find yourself." And then, right on the top of this frightful insult to one of the most eligible bachelors on the Atlantic Seaboard, she became businesslike.

"Oh, my goodness," she said, "I almost forgot. There's a special meeting of the board on Saturday. Miss Beasley is hoping you can come."

"On Saturday," said William, "I shall be on my way to Monte Carlo." The girl put a finger to her lip. Those lips . . .

"It's something very, very special," she said. "About the furnace." And William knew she wanted him to come. He smiled.

"On Saturday," he said again, "I shall be on my way to Monte Carlo." But when the girl had gone on, he found himself fighting against such a sense of loss as he had not known since he was four, and mislaid his woolly bear on wheels.

After dinner—and because he no longer had any pride—he started out for the Administration Building.

He turned through a gap in the hedge and stopped. His darling wasn't in the Administration Building at all; she was out walking with a man. William saw the two of them come up the orphanage driveway. And then he saw something else so incredible, so horrible, that he stood chained to the spot.

For the girl reached up on tiptoe, and drawing the man's face down she kissed him swiftly on the lips. William supported himself against a tree and closed his eyes. He had recognized the man, too. He was the good-looking chap who had watched him in the village store.

"I wuzn't drownin'," she howled; "I wuz swimmin'."

By the following morning poor Muggins had once again engaged the suite with the early American furniture. Mrs. Brinckerhof, who was motoring in New Jersey, was stopping for William at about eight in the evening to bring him to New York. That left William the whole day in which to examine his broken heart and dismal prospects.

The sad hours doddered on; William went about with a white and strained look. At seven o'clock he sat down to eat his last meal in Lindenhurst. Muggins entered.

"Mr. Haring, sir," he said queerly. "Look!" And he pointed.

William looked. From the first-floor window of the Administration Building something came curling . . . a gray pennant of smoke which hung lazily on the air! It grew imperceptibly darker.

"Oh!" cried William, and although he was not a nervous man, he grew sick with fear.

"Telephone the village, Muggins," he said, and then he ran as he had never run before toward the orphanage.

He came to the Administration Building, which was really just an old-fashioned house, and perceived that it was the room directly beneath the girl's that was afire. There were children and teachers standing in front of the building. But not the person whom William loved. Miss Beasley came around the corner of the porch.

"Where is she?" demanded William, and he did not even think it strange that Miss Beasley should know exactly whom he meant.

"She went up to her room for something," said Miss Beasley. But William was already gone. The front hall was half-filled with smoke, but he dashed up the stairs to the second floor and threw open a convenient door. The girl with the corn-colored hair swung around and stood looking at him.

"Oh, my darling!" said William. "Thank God I have been able to find you!"

The girl frowned.

"But I was not aware that I was lost, Mr. Haring," she said. "And even if I were it would hardly give you the privilege to address me in such a—in such a manner."

"But I don't know your name," protested William. "Besides we mustn't lose a moment. We're in danger of death."

The girl appeared surprised; inconsequentially William noticed she held something.

"Is this what you came back for?" he asked tenderly as he took it from her. "Is this what——" He saw now that it was a book, a book with a familiar jacket. A book by P. C. McNulty! He stared at it incredulously. *A book by P. C. McNulty!*

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed when he could at last speak. "Do you mean to say you've risked your life—and I have risked mine—for a book—and by this imbecile, of all people?"

"I had to have it," said the girl.

"You had to have it," William said hoarsely. "And you told me you read no new fiction. You lied to me! Lied—and I believed you. And now we are both paying for that lie, paying with our lives, perhaps."

"Well, nobody asked you to come up here after me," said the girl, and she coughed from the imperceptible smoke. "Besides you haven't rescued me yet. All you've done so far is quarrel."

"I haven't rescued you yet, but I will!" exclaimed William passionately. "As for no one asking me, I came because—well, because I love you. Oh, I know you belong to another," he said as he saw the girl start. "But the fact remains—I, William Haring, love you!" He seemed profoundly melancholy.

"How extraordinary!" observed the girl at last. Then she held out her hand, presumably for the book.

"Nothing doing!" said William nastily, and he kicked it into the corner. But as he kicked it two objects tumbled out; the girl got one, and he got the other. And then he stood rooted to the floor with surprise.

For what he had retrieved was a picture of himself, cut from a newspaper. He had on puttees like a movie director and he really looked an awful pancake, but it was William just the same. Rapture pervaded him.

"Is this yours?" he inquired.

"I never saw it before," replied the girl. "Give it back at once."

"Then you like me," said William. "Better than the other fellow?"

"Like you!" retorted the girl. "Why, I can't stand the sight of you!" But William laughed.

"Don't tell me," he exulted. "You haven't been carrying around a picture of me for nothing. You love me! I'll show you that you love me!" And he seized the girl in his strong arms and kissed her with the most ungentlemanly and tropical abandon. But in the midst

of it the girl sent him spinning from her.

"You'll show me, will you, you coward?" she queried. "Well, let me show you something now. I have kept that picture, not because I love you at all, but because I hate you! I hate you! I hate you! And every night I have stuck pins into it and imagined it was you while I was doing it!" (Poor William! Pins!) "And I have kept a letter, too," the girl went on. "A letter you wrote about me!"

"About you?" said William amazed.

"About me," replied the girl. "I am Carol Johnson, you know."

There was a pause, an awful pause. Then William spread out his hands.

"There's—there's just nothing more to say after that, is there?" he asked. He went to the door, opened it, and closed it. The lower floor was a dark-gray, swirling pit.

"We can't get out that way," he said. His glance went to the window. "Isn't there a back stairs to this place?"

"There's a ladder to the ground from a back window," said Carol with the utmost indifference.

"All right," said William, "let's go." The girl looked at him.

"I prefer to remain," she remarked. William stared.

"You adorable lunatic," he said angrily. "I'm going to save you if I have to spank you to do it." And he picked her up in arms of steel. She could no more have struggled than she could have gone out on wings.

"But before we go," William said, "I want you to know something. Because we may never again speak to one another. I want you to know that I was speaking the truth when I said I loved you. I love you so much that if I had five minutes left to me out of life, I'd—I'd want to spend that five minutes with you!"

Carol looked at him, and saw a William that was rather dirty and no longer very handsome. But in his eyes there was something shining—a pledge of fidelity to death and beyond! She realized that he was indeed speaking the truth. But then she remembered the letter.

"Well, now that you've said you love me," she remarked with amusement, "is there anything else you wish to mention?" William winced.

"Nothing else," he replied. And he flung open the door. It was still fairly clear of smoke in the wide hall, but as they reached the window at the back a perfect sea of smoke billowed into the room they had quitted.

William put the girl down for a moment to climb over the window-sill and stand upon the topmost rung of the ladder leading down from the roof. They were now at the back of the house, but even here from the windows smoke was pouring upwards. Confused shouts came from below. Having made sure his footing he caught Carol in his arms. She realized suddenly that he was exceptionally strong.

"I see you're admiring my splendid muscular development," observed William. He took her tighter in his arms and worked his way down slowly into the Stygian blackness. More steps . . . and then they were on the ground. William set the girl on her feet.

"Having saved your life may I be permitted to feel somewhat pleased with myself?" he asked. Carol looked at him.

"Do you remember the time you pulled me out of a pond and found I hadn't been drowning?"

"Has that anything particular to do with my having saved you from a fiery demise?"

"There are points of similarity," said the girl. "Because if you had looked you would have noticed that there was only smoke—no flame. In other words there hasn't been a fire at all! This has been merely the Administration House furnace misbehaving—as it misbehaves once every year, the first time it's lit." William stared.

"What!" he yelled.

"And your rescue was so realistic, too," said the girl. "But then you seem fated to save people that are in no particular danger, don't you? It must be quite amusing!

"Now you know," said Carol after a moment, "how I felt when I read the letter. Foolish— and tricked—and very, very angry."

"I'm sorry," said William with sincerity.

"Sorry!" derided Carol. So William became angry again.

"Hasn't it occurred to any one to get a new furnace?" he demanded. "Or is that beyond the Lindenhurst intelligence?"

"It isn't," replied Carol coldly. "That is what the special meeting on Saturday was to be about, as I told you. But by the terms of your father's will giving us this property, we must have a vice-chairman at the meeting. And all our vice-chairmen are now running around Europe!"

"I'm here." William observed.

"You!" breathed Carol. But before she could add to this some one came around the corner of the house. "Oh Charlie," said Carol, and William recognized him as the man she had kissed in the moonlight.

"What's happened?" asked the man named Charlie.

"I'VE just carried Miss Johnson down the ladder under the impression that I was saving her life," replied William.

"But he's been completely corrected," said Carol. "I have told him that it is merely our famous furnace—that there isn't any fire."

"But my dear," Charlie said gently, "there *is* a fire! Is it possible that you haven't realized it yet?" And he led Carol around to the front where already the lower floor was a seething trap. Miss Beasley appeared out of the shouting darkness.

"Oh, my dear child," she said, "what I suffered when Charlie Price said he hadn't found you in your room."

"Did you go up after me?" asked Carol; then she saw his hands. "Oh, your poor hands!" she cried.

A spasm of pain went through William.

"Just the tone she doesn't use to me!" he thought.

Miss Beasley was blubbering softly and with perfect breeding.

"They never told us this would occur," she said. "And we've had so many people here to look at the furnace, too."

"I should like to give you a new furnace if I may," said William, smiling courageously. "And a new Administration Building to put it in, and a whole new orphanage, in fact." Miss Beasley blubbered loudly, now.

"Let me do myself the honor of apologizing to you, Mr. Haring," she said gratefully. "And by the way have you met Mr. Price yet. There's a special reason, you know, why you should be acquainted with Mr. Price."

"I'm aware of the reason," said poor William. "And I should like to consider the new orphanage as a wedding gift to Miss Johnson."

"But she's not going to marry me," said Charlie Price. "She's not in love with me. I—I rather believe it's you. She's liked you ever since you pulled her out of the pond and I stood and laughed!"

"So that's where I know you from," said Mr. Haring. "And I suppose she likes me so much that that is why she kissed *you* in the moonlight the other night?"

"She kissed me because she was refusing me," said Charlie Price. "And because I'm going away. To Monte Carlo."

"In that case," said William, "let me present you with a suite on the *Cameronia*. It sails Saturday noon, and the furniture is early American!" And then William and Carol were alone.

"I suppose you want me to say I'm sorry!" exclaimed Carol at last.

"My darling," said William, mildly, "was there ever any Heliotrope?"

And then Carol laughed—a little brook in the still of the woods. "Having settled that," said William, "let me ask you what you went back for. Was it the picture?"

"No, the letter," replied Carol. "I was afraid you would come to see me before you went away, and I was determined to hate you to the end. But I couldn't hate you properly without the letter. So I came back for it."

"And do you hate me still?" asked Mr. Haring.

"Only very moderately," replied Miss Johnson.

"Only one thing now remains," said William. "Will you admit I am a better novelist than that sap McNulty?"

"No!" replied Carol, stamping her foot. "Because you're not! You take yourself too seriously. What you need is to marry some one who sees right through you, and considers you rather an idiot!"

William looked at her. "Why, you shameless woman. I believe you're proposing to me!" he remarked. And then Muggins approached.

"Mrs. Brinckerhof has arrived, sir," said Muggins. Then he blushed the most ear-splitting pink. For William was kissing a lady!

Still, a message was a message and Muggins was going to deliver his or bust.

"As I was saying, sir," he resumed, "Mrs. Brinckerhof has arrived. And she particularly desires to know, sir, if you have yet ascertained that Napoleon was not the only one?"

"I'm in conference, Muggins," said William, at last. "But you can tell Mrs. Brinckerhof—that if this is Waterloo, it's the alligator's earache!"

contemplated—his only fear was that she might.

Homan remained silent all the way to London for there was much to consider, and Captain Dixon too was lost in thought. Finally they debarked from the train and a bus deposited them near Rutledge Square, the goal of their pilgrimage.

They knocked at what would have appeared a private hall door but for the lettered blinds, and were ushered by an anaemic young woman into a dingy room where a portly gentleman awaited them.

He informed them nasally that the lady was waiting in another room. Would the intending gentleman step in? The energy with which the intending gentleman clung to Captain Dixon made it plain, however, that he would do nothing of the sort.

Slowly urging the lover forward Captain Dixon moved to the door and turned the handle with a jerk. They entered.

THERE stood a young woman—a girl, tall, finely set up, with dangerous eyes and a color like a rose. Her dress revealed the frank outlines of a figure almost like a boy's—lithe and strong, with capable hands and feet. One judged her a good comrade, a foe to be respected. Captain Dixon and his friend stared at her in consternation. These were not the comfortable curves of the ample lady of the photograph.

"This will be the gentleman that advertised, I guess?"

She paused on the question, and her clear eyes were focussed on Captain Dixon. He stared at her helplessly, but the eyes swept off him and the search-ray was transferred to Captain Homan.

"No, it's you," she said. "You don't look like a married man. He does. Can't we all sit down?"

They did.

"It might seem a bit strange that I met you like this, but easy explained," she went on. "My dad followed the sea. I might say I was brought up to the sea, for dad took me with him on all his runs, and he used to say there wasn't a deck-hand, no, nor a mate that he could count on more than me in a tight place. When he took ill with fever, coming up from Papalite——"

"Papalite!" It burst from Captain Dixon like a bomb as he surveyed this astonishing young woman.

"Papalite? Why not?" she replied composedly. "My dad was skipper of the *Spray*, trading along the Barrier Reef for bird-skins, pearl-shell and oddments. What might there be in the name to surprise you? You put 'Apply Papalite' in the paper, and that's what brought me here."

"You don't need to know yet what there might be," said Captain Dixon firmly. "What was your dad's name?"

"My dad's name was Samuel Hardy. They called him Cap'n Stormalong down Papalite way, for there wasn't one of them would face a blow like him. So——"

"Stormalong!" shrieked Captain Homan. "Didn't I know him? Didn't I see him at Port Moresby when he come back with the hold full o' Paradise skins from up the coast? He made a tidy bit out of that run. Now you don't mean to tell me you was the kid with big blue eyes on Stormalong's knee in the cabin, and your hair in two tails at the back?"

"Look at my eyes!" she said with a smile and opened them full on Captain Homan. They were as blue as the seas of the Pacific.

"It's little Java Hardy so sure's I sit here," said Captain Homan. "Java!—you was born in Surabaya, wasn't you? And Stormalong says: 'That's too heavy canvas for such a little barque to carry. I'll call her Java.'"

She sprang to her feet with shining eyes and caught his hand in two supple palms.

"Righto!" she cried, "I'm Java and I know you too. You're Captain Homan of the *Dancer* schooner. And when you came aboard at Port Moresby you gave me this—and I've worn it ever since for luck."

She pulled out of the bosom of her dress a thin, old-fashioned, gold watch-chain. Slung to the end of it was a freakish blister-pearl, blobbed by Nature's own hand into a stocky human figure, an overgrown head and blobs for legs and arms. Rough but decipherable. She held it out, laughing at the speechless amazement of the two. At last Captain Dixon broke the silence.

"It's Providence and no mistake. And you can't go against Providence any more than you can beat up against a dead head wind. Now just you sit down again, young woman, and speak your mind. What's been your log since Homan saw you at Port Moresby and what signals are you running up now?"

She pulled herself resolutely together, and sat down.

"My dad's dead," she began. "He had fever coming up from Papalite, and the mate went overboard in a gale, and I had to take command and carry on. And I did."

"She did!" repeated Captain Dixon with eyes like saucers. And Captain Homan echoed him. Amazement could rise no higher but admiration soared above it.

"I brought the ship into Erith and dad died next day. But before he died he said—'I wanted a boy, Java, when you were born, but I'll own up now, as I lie here with Blue Peter hoisted, that there isn't a boy in the Seven Seas as could have done better than Captain Java!' My dad said so," she whispered with wet eyes, "and dad knew a sailor from a longshoreman, you'll allow!"

"He did that! Old Stormalong!" said Captain Homan. "Well, my girl, what then?"

"Why, then, I was sorry I was a woman," she said. "The ship was mine, but I couldn't use her and I wouldn't sell her. If I'd been a man I'd have been off the minute I could fit out, but who'd sail with Captain Java if I hadn't my dad behind me? So I went ashore with my kit, and since a fortnight I've been living with my aunt, but I'm not with her permanently. So when I saw your advertisement I just thought—I might as well see if it would lead to anything. You get a bit desperate sometimes."

"You do—God knows!" Captain Dixon echoed. "But d'ye mean to say you'd marry a stranger to get out of it? Lord bless me, is your aunt as bad as that?"

"Pretty bad!" Captain Java said judicially. "But I'm used to sailors, and I thought . . . There's always a chance you know. No harm in looking at a man."

Captain Homan flushed a hot brick-red. Scotty viewed his friend with a question in his eye. Could he be called a chance for a clipper of a girl like that?

She settled the question with a flash of her blue eye.

"There's no talk of marriage. What I want is some one to sail my ship and take me along. I want *uncles*. That's what I'm out for. Uncles."

There was real art in that speech, the finest sort, which conceals itself in frankness. Of course she could not have known then that there was such a person as Roger Wynyard in existence. She saw in the eyes of the prospective uncles how her statement had gone home.

"All I ask is that you come and look over the *Spindrift* tomorrow and then think it over," she pursued her advantage. "Now I've told you my game. What's yours?"

There was nothing for it but frankness, and after all she inspired confidence. Captain Dixon unbosomed himself of domestic woes; Captain Homan of his bottomless boredom with a shore-going life. There could be no more doubt. Three kindred spirits were met. They all panted for Papalite or its like; they all loathed the trammels of civilization. Three born adventurers. An immense sympathy sprang up between them.

THE conspirators met at the Long Pier next day. Now it is no use detailing to landsmen the perfections of the schooner *Spindrift* because they must be seen to be appreciated, and seen under Captain Java's guidance. Suffice it to say she had no novices in her uncles, and after an exhaustive tour they were satisfied.

"Well?" asked Captain Java with the blue search-light of her eyes sweeping them impartially. "Now you've seen her, is there anything you want to ask?"

"Nothing!" Captain Homan said.

"Then if I find the ship will you find the cargo? Isn't that fair dues?"

"Fair dues. Never fairer. Scotty and me, we'll find the cargo and take equal risks, and we'll pay you regular owner's percentage, same's always done down Papalite way. We'll have it all put in black and white before twenty-four hours is over. Will it suit you?"

"Fine!" She smiled charmingly on them. "Let's all go along to the lawyer tomorrow. And look here. I'm not going to Captain you any longer. You're my uncles. My dear, dear long-lost uncles. What's *your* name?" She turned to Homan.

"Enry," he said stolidly.

"And yours?"

"Erbert."

"Uncle Enry and Uncle Erbert," she repeated. "Well, come along, uncles! There's lots to be done."

The three came ashore with the gravity of urgent concerns upon them, and as they parted, she said brightly:

"And if either of you gives the show away about my being only an adopted niece I'll let you hear of it. Uncle Enry's sister married Uncle Erbert's brother and I'm Java Dixon."

After that matters proceeded steadily. The only question in the minds of either uncle was voiced by Enry when Erbert met him by stealth at The Ring o' Bells one night after one of the former's many conferences with Java in London.

"She got a man's sense," said Captain Homan. "Take this cargo, now. She knows what's what as well as I do. Fact is, she sometimes has ideas I'd never thought of. She's smart, Java is, smart and pretty. Pretty as they make them."

"She is," agreed Captain Dixon.

"Have you thought," Uncle Enry swallowed a long draft from his tankard, "that she'll be the only white woman and you 'n me the only white men on the island?"

Uncle Erbert wriggled in his chair uneasily. "Skittles!" he replied with derision.

"Just the same," insisted Uncle Enry, "just the same, we both know as there is cannibals——"

"Not in Papalite," hastily interposed Captain Dixon. "Leastways," he amended, "not down on the shore where we'd have our humpy."

"But back in the mountains there is," stated Captain Homan, "just the same as on all them islands. And you know as well as I do them heathen practise all sorts of——"

"Now, now," soothed the instigator of the adventurous expedition, "suppose they do believe in devil-devils, that's no sign——"

"They won't devil-devil us," cut in Uncle Enry. "If anything should happen to Java we'd be responsible."

"There won't nothing happen to Java," said Uncle Erbert impatiently. "And anyhow, wasn't she just waiting for us? Don't she want to go as bad as we do?"

There being no refuting this argument, Captain Homan returned to a discussion of the all-important cargo. Of necessity Uncle Erbert had retired into the background. From this safe vantage-point he offered advice in a state of passionate but suppressed excitement. Until the day they sailed, Homan and he never met but at The Ring o' Bells.

That was a solemn day. The goods he needed he had sent straight to Erith and aboard the *Spindrift*, and Mrs. Dixon was as ignorant of what was going on under her nose as any ill-used woman need wish to be.

It was only two evenings before sailing that he broached a part of his intentions. Trying hard for an easy and disengaged manner he began:

"'Tisn't a good life, Betsy, for a man to be always in his wife's way, sitting there with nothin' to do. Homan's got a job sudden, and why not me?"

She looked at him with eyes like corkscrews.

"Now you've got somethin' on your mind, Erbert Dixon. Out with it right here. What's Homan's job?"

"He's going supercargo on a ship running down the Mediterranean. But there's another ship on the same run with room for a mate aboard. I don't say but what it'd be a come-down from skipper, but still it's a good screw and something to do, and me out of your way."

A pause during which he did his best to look unconcerned.

"If it was on board the same ship with that old fly-by-night, I'd not have let you go, no, not if you prayed me on your bended knees. But if it's away from him, and the pay's decent I've no objections. Well, when do you want to be off?"

He named Wednesday with a faltering tongue, and to his immense and astonished joy it was accepted on the spot. The unflattering truth, more precious to him than any flattery, was that his Betsy wanted to be rid of him. The terms of temporary separation were easily settled, for gratitude made him lavish, and she undertook his mending with a better grace than he expected.

Two days later the *Spindrift* slipped down the river.

A SEA as hard and brilliant as if all the blueing bags of civilization had been dissolved in it—a shadowless, stainless blue. Not a wave, not a ripple, a mirror intolerably reflecting the rays of an almost intolerable sun.

A mighty island, typical of myriads more, ringed with coral, plumed with palms, running up into peaks from which tumbled a rushing river carrying down the only news of the unexplored heights; an island fertile as the Garden of Eden, with huge pawpaw trees, granadillas and other tropic fruits for the gathering, reef crabs and fish for the catching, and pork, rich and abundant, for the eating.

The provisions, as stated in Captain Homan's advertisement, were lovely. There was certainly no deception about them. And with the *Spindrift* lying snugly in the lagoon inside the safe barrier of the coral reef, it might be called the Island of Dreams Come True. It was not Papalite. No, it was far better, for it was Paradise Island, and their own.

They had chosen the right road to modest fortune. On this outlying island, where the natives as yet were unsophisticated and ignorant of the white man's evil-doings, they had bought as much land as they needed, with plenty of laborers at hand to clear and plant the cocoanuts, sweet potatoes and cotton. The trading company that sent its little chugging steamer every two months to pick up cargo realized that here were people of the right stuff.

Kindly treated, the natives responded as human nature mostly will, and after more than a year, what with the improved cultivation of their own island and the prosperous trading voyages of the *Spindrift* to neighbouring islands, things were developing a deal faster than they really had any right to expect. The balance in the bank at Hampden was running up quite comfortably.

Java looked after her uncles thoroughly, a benevolent despot, showing no preference. Uncle Enry could not crow over Uncle Erbert or vice versa. Each possessed a dutiful affectionate niece as full of good sense as an egg of meat. Her housekeeping, with two native women under her orders, was perfection.

It was near sunset, and Java in a pink and white cotton dress was shading her eyes from the low sun as she looked for Uncle Erbert who was catching crabs, not in a boat but along the shore. The little house which they had bought of a departed planter glowed in the rosy light, clad in flowers that a millionaire's purse could not buy in the cold north.

Java stood on the white walk that led up to the wooden house, brown as a bird's nest against the surrounding green. She joined her hands and put them to her mouth, trumpet-fashion.

"Uncle Enry, you come along this minute. We don't want crabs tonight and if we do, Mike can get them. You come along. The curry'll be cold."

Uncle Enry quickened his step and she went down to meet him. The water was quite deep off the coral just there, the cool transparent green of a cat's eyes. She stood a moment to see her own wavering reflection, then hooked her arm in his.

"I mean to have a moonlight swim after supper. Lucky no sharks in here! Oh, what a life! What a heavenly life! Why does anybody stay away?"

"Because they don't know no better. What's for supper, Java?"

"There's a fruit salad, and chowder—real good, my own making—and curry, and coffee . . . I'm as hungry as a sea-hawk."

"Isn't it a pity Dixon ain't here to have his bit?" Captain Homan said reflectively.

"I'll look after him, don't you be afraid! I wonder what luck he's had down to Nukulu. I wish I could have gone along with him. You mustn't have lumbago next time, Uncle Enry."

"No more I must. But we'll give him a rousing welcome anyhow."

They walked up through the pawpaw trees to the house and the pleasant little parlor where supper was served by Kuki, or as the uncles called her "Cookey," magnificent in her white grass petticoat.

So they enjoyed their meal while the sun set in gold and crimson splendors and left the world to the sleepy care of a quietly rising moon. Captain Homan pulled his chair outside and lit his pipe. Java, on her way down to the lagoon to bathe, turned to hail her uncle and tell him the *Spindrift* was back from Nukulu. She had dropped anchor about a mile off in the lagoon.

"She's back. I'll be up in half an hour. Uncle Erbert won't be round before that!" she called, and went on down to the pier.

The lagoon was so beautiful with moonlight and the milky flames of phosphorus that it subdued her into a sort of solemnity. She slipped into the sun-warmed water as quietly as a fish, keeping herself afloat with noiseless strokes.

Hallo! Oars! Where from? She turned over, and like a sea-snake, raised her head above the ripples. Yes, a small boat, the *Spindrift's* dinghy coming toward the little coral pier.

It must be Uncle Erbert pulling himself home, for there was only one man aboard her. And then Java remembered

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ANYONE can now have a fine-textured skin, radiant with the fresh coloring of youth, smooth and firm as a child's. In only 15 minutes mind you! In this amazingly short time you can have a brand-new, beautiful complexion!

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she was not exactly in court dress, and edged noiselessly behind a coral rock, mooring herself to it with one hand, and watched, prepared to give Uncle Erbert a hail. But to her amazement it was not Uncle Erbert. A stranger, a man, bareheaded, with loose white shirt falling from a brown throat, was edging the dinghy to the pier.

He began to sing, not loudly, but in a fine pleasant tenor. A rollicking tune!

The story of Frederick Gowler,
A mariner of the sea,
Who quitted his ship, the Howler,
A sailing in Caribbee.
For many a day he wandered
Till he met, in a state of rum,
Calamity Pop von Peppermint Drop,
The King of Canoodle—Dum.

She never meant to laugh, but she did, very softly, and a ripple splashed into her mouth and nearly choked her. He looked around as if startled. Only rocks, coral, the dazzling white beach and the window of the humpy with the lamplight competing with the moonlight.

"Well, I'm blowed," said the tenor. "I thought I heard . . . But it couldn't have been." He paused again, looked about him and began to pull slowly toward the tiny pier.

Swaying in the water, anchored by her one hand, Java saw him tie the boat up to one of the rings. He started directly up the beach toward the little home. Java immediately swam for the pier, and got into her clothes as quickly as possible. She was simmering with curiosity.

Voices greeted her a long way off. They carried far in that night silence. First Uncle Enry, inquisitive, a little stand-off. She couldn't catch the words. Then the tenor, polite, brief in statement. Java quickened her trot while under cover, slackening to a dignified walk when she emerged into moonlight.

The stranger was sitting silhouetted against the open door. She could hear now what he was saying, and hung on her foot a minute to listen.

"Well, sir, we put our money together—young fools, you'll say—and bought the brig. Ten pounds apiece we gave for her, a crazy old brute of a scow, and we started from Sydney, thinking to come back from New Guinea a set of blooming millionaires."

"What might her name be?" asked Uncle Enry.

"*The Warrigal.* And then . . . "

She couldn't stand there for ever to listen. She advanced with staid dignity. The stranger jumped to his feet. A girl, a pretty girl, coming up from the sea! Astonishing apparition! Uncle Enry introduced them with awful propriety.

"My niece, Miss Dixon. This gent's name is Wynyard, he says."

"Roger Wynyard," supplemented the stranger.

"And he's telling of a trip he made with a lot of young fellows from Sydney, prospecting up New Guinea way. But take your chair, Java, my dear, and I'll have out another. Dixon will be up before long, he says."

Captain Java took her chair and surveyed Wynyard calmly. She was not an easily flurried young woman, else this sudden advent might have flushed her a little.

He resumed his story more consciously, as a man will with a pretty girl's eyes upon him.

"Well, we knew when it was too late to mend our luck that she was as leaky as a sieve and the spars and sails not fit to face a breeze, much less the northwest monsoon. I was the only fellow on board who knew anything of navigation, and to make a long story short, either I didn't know as much as I should or the luck was against us, for we struck on the Gravel Reef and that was the end of the ship. It was blowing hard and several of the men were drowned. The master deserted in the best boat with six men, and that was the last I saw of them. Whether they reached land or not I couldn't tell you."

"What come of the other boats?" asked Uncle Enry in his ruminative way.

"They were as leaky as the brig to start with, and they drowned eight men before the brig slipped off the reef and sank to her lower yards. I am the only man left, unless the big boat reached land, and I climbed the rigging, and sat there for twenty-four hours. I won't tell you all I went through before the *Spindrift* passed, so I'll wind up by saying I made signals, and she took me off. Cap'n Dixon treated me like a king for the week I was on board, and here I am to tell you he'll be up shortly, and to give you, as part owner, my grateful thanks, for I owe my life and more to your partner and your boat."

"THAT'S the owner!" said Uncle Enry, jerking a thumb toward the silent Java, and the young man turned and looked at her in astonishment.

"That's Cap'n Java!" said Uncle Enry firmly, much enjoying his effect. "And if you come to talk of partners——"

"D'ye mean to say, sir, the schooner's that young lady's property?"

Captain Homan nodded violently.

The young man stared with such blank astonishment at her that Java intervened.

"It's true I own the schooner, but my uncles and I are really partners in a trading concern. I don't count her more mine than theirs, and I'm sure we're all three as glad as can be she happened along that way and picked you up. Have you had your supper?"

He had, but it was all like a dream to him. Events had rattled along too quickly to carry him with them; the voyage, the wreck, the rescue, and now this fairy island and the queer old man and the astonishing girl. Uncle Enry rose presently and went into the house, and the two were alone.

"It isn't a dream," she said laughing a little when he stammered his astonishment. "You're not in the rigging, dreaming you're ashore, but safe and sound on dry land."

"I know," he said eagerly. "I'd got used to that aboard the *Spindrift*. It's the island, and the house, and the flowers, and you."

A pause.

"You don't see many people here, I guess, dropping in as I did. You must have been pretty surprised, Miss Dixon, when you found me here."

She looked at him with a smile in her eyes.

"Guess I might have been. But you see I knew you were here."

"You knew? How in the name of——"

She interrupted, humming softly.

Calamity Pop Von Peppermint Drop,
The King of Canoodle-Dum.

"What? You heard me singing? Where were you?"

"Ah where?" she tantalized him.

"There's Dixon!" Uncle Enry said. "I know his step in a thousand. You go meet him, Java."

She flew, light-footed, as the elephantine tread pounded up the pawpaw walk, and presently reappeared with her arm through the Captain's. Not five minutes, but in that five minutes she had assured herself that Uncle Erbert considered Wynyard a fine young fellow, full of grit, that he spoke up for himself very nice and sensible, that he said he hadn't a friend in the world but an uncle in Sydney in the Cape Line office, and that he had served mate on one of the coasting steamers of that line. She also gleaned about half a hundred more details that none but a woman could have got out of a slow mover like Uncle Erbert in the time.

THE next happenings are so obvious that they need no dressing out. Given flint and tinder, what happens? A spark.

Events marched quickly. It became very clear to Uncles Erbert and Enry that Wynyard might be a valuable asset in the growing business of the *Spindrift*. The trading steamer called so seldom at Paradise Island that some of the cargo was apt to suffer by delay and it would be certainly a more paying proposition if they could send the *Spindrift* down to meet the steamer at Nukulu. Indeed that had been discussed by the three partners before Wynyard turned up. But there were difficulties. It was not always well to leave the island to the tender mercies of the native boys, and not for the wealth of the Indies would the uncles have left Java alone. Then Captain Homan's lumbago had to be considered, for if he were left in charge he could not always get about to oversee the work going on in the sago swamps.

It would certainly be very handy if there were a man who could be trusted to run the ship down to Nukulu and transact all the business there while life went on as usual in Paradise Island. Or, the other way over, he could look after the work, and Uncle Enry skipper the ship when that suited them better.

There were many powwows held between the three partners before this was broached to Wynyard, however, and it was as good as a play to see the uncles doing their best to persuade Captain Java that it would be a wise move, while she sat in sphinx-like silence.

"You see, Java, he could have a little humpy down at the end o' the garden, and Kuki's sister to keep it clean, so it wouldn't be no trouble to you," urged Uncle Erbert.

He cast a questioning eye at her. Certainly it would add to the gayety of nations if Wynyard turned up with his laughing brown face at every meal. But Java was reticent.

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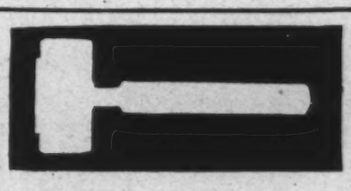

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trading and the work hereabouts, why I've nothing to say, though for my part I think we did very well as we were."

"She don't like the notion!" said Uncle Erbert turning a melancholy gaze on Uncle Enry. "And if she don't like it . . . why we wouldn't go for to propose it, would we, Homan?"

"Why, no, Dixon. Best say no more if the little Cap'n don't like it."

And Java suddenly unaccountably burst into tears.

"Oh, my heavens! Did I ever say I didn't like it? What I said was—Have him if you want him. Now! *is that* plain?"

She darted off into the bush, leaving the two staring at each other.

"First time I ever knew Java to behave like a woman!" said Captain Homan in a voice of deadly alarm. "Plain as print? I'm jiggered if I know what she wants."

"It's my belief she don't know herself," Captain Dixon answered ruefully. "She reminded me of the missus then, as like as two peas. But my advice is—have him, and if it don't answer why then it's a case of 'Your way lies north, mine south, and henceforwards we're in sunders.' That's easy said if needful."

So it was settled. Wynyard accepted joyfully, and a little house was run up under the cocoa palms beyond the garden.

The uncles heaped Java with propitiations and adorations for her wonderful kindness in agreeing to a measure she had scarcely approved, and as to Wynyard, he overflowed with the humblest gratitude.

"For I know you didn't want me, Miss Dixon," he said a little sadly, one evening after a long day's work in the sago swamp. Java had walked down to the beach in the moonlight, and the uncles were reclining on long chairs outside the house, their souls filled with peace.

"Did I ever say I didn't want you?" she countered.

"You never said it—no, but you never said you did."

"Silence gives consent," she quoted.

"Not the sort of consent that warms a fellow's heart. Won't you ever say you're glad I'm here?"

"I'm glad to see my uncles get the help they want. I'm glad . . ."

"YES? What?" He pushed up a little too close in his eagerness, and she turned at once to the house.

"Glad from a business point of view," she said coolly, as he followed meekly in her wake. He knew very well, if she didn't, that for the ghost of a smile, the fag-end of a kind word he would serve her seven years on Paradise Island like Jacob.

Day by day he grew into the ways of the place. It was Java who knew all about the life of the islanders and their inmost concerns, and though never a word that verged near sentiment was allowed him, she was perfectly friendly, and would talk by the hour of all the queer things and people surrounding them.

"Did you ever notice," Java said one night, "how all the native boys kowtow to Hanua? He's the queerest old character on the island. Yams, pigs, shells, tobacco, he has more than he knows what to do with. Kuki says the ground under his house is flenty" (she gave the letter p, impossible to the South Sea people, a harsh f sound) "full like grave of all his riches."

"Yes, but why? He doesn't seem to be different from any of the others, 'cept that he's older and uglier."

"He's the greatest puri-puri man, or sorcerer, in these parts. That's why!" said Java. "And if you like you can see him at work next week, for Kuki tells me a canoe's coming over from Lua with great presents to make puri-puri about a chief who died there."

"But you don't mean to say you believe in all that jabber, Miss Dixon?"

"I don't know what I believe. My father traveled a lot in these parts, and I've often heard him say he thought there was more to this devil business than most people allow. Whether it's a kind of hypnotism, something that could be explained, or whether . . . No, I believe it's something that could be explained if one knew how. You see, the people here were once cannibals and ate their enemies, all but the heads. They preserved the bodies of their chiefs, and Hanua's the only man left in these parts who understands how to dry the dead bodies and paint them like mummies."

"What a beastly trade!" said Wynyard. "I've heard of it but never believed it. And what do they do with them?"

"Who knows?" said Java. "But anyhow, it's known that on some of the big islands hereabouts they have secret lodges, hidden away in the jungle, where they keep the bodies and the dried heads. Even here, in our own island, we know there are people we've never seen up in the mountains where the river comes from, and I believe from what Kuki and other women have told me that they're cannibals still. Anyhow, they have these secret places for keeping the dead chiefs. They must be terrible to see."

"Could one get a sight?" Wynyard asked. She gave a quick shudder.

"No, no! We never talk of these things. It would be dangerous. Never meddle with a man's religion here. Besides these people never come down from the mountains. They give no trouble. But if the thing interests you, you watch Hanua. He goes up into the mountains, I know."

Wynyard did watch. He walked next day through the village where all the boys lived in low but not uncomfortable thatched shacks on the edge of the palm groves. Hanua's house stood apart from the others, with two Marys (Mary is the word used for women down in these parts) flitting about it—wives conceded to the great puri-puri man by island fear and respect. A man would go up to his house with a basket of yams, another followed with a suckling pig, presenting them humbly; and the wives received the offerings in dead silence, as if they were a matter of course. Hanua never appeared.

It was then that Wynyard took a resolution. There was the natural curiosity of a young man, but far beyond that was the conviction that if Hanua were in touch with islands where no white man held sway, where all these barbarous rites were in full swing, it would be as well for some one of the party to keep in touch with Hanua and ascertain very clearly what manner of man he was.

Wynyard advanced toward the sorcerer's hut holding out a stick of the treacly trade tobacco which he always kept in his pocket, ready to hack off an inch or two as a reward for hard-working boys. One of the dark, silent women, came forward, the other hanging in the background. She stretched out her hand for the gift.

WYNYARD held it back and made signs toward the house. He must see the puri-puri man. She shook her head vigorously. He pretended to put the tobacco in his pocket, while the other wife ran up to her, pointing to the hut. What would the master say if he lost his tobacco? The first, hesitating a moment, went up to the house and disappeared. Presently Hanua himself stood in the doorway, the women crouching behind him like dogs.

"*Taubada*, what for you come?" was the greeting.

"I like to know great puri-puri man. Missy tell me he flenty wise. I bring plesant," holding out the tobacco. A gratified smile overspread the sorcerer's countenance.

"Me have great devil-devil!" he said. "You come in see?"

This was a favor beyond thanks. He turned and led the way into the mysteries and Wynyard, handing over the tobacco, beamed at him and followed, amazed at his own success.

Seen from the front the house appeared no longer than the others, but once inside the difference revealed itself. Wynyard saw a long enclosure, more a hall than a room, with dim shapes standing about it against the sides of woven palm-leaf. At the end hung a curtain of fiber, hiding some mystery. From a rafter dangled a great snake skeleton, fine as lace.

"Devil-devil!" said the proprietor, halting on the threshold with one eye on the guest, and pointing to the shapes which held their silent watch in the gloom.

There indeed, Wynyard, though not startled, was astonished beyond measure. Sculptured in wood, hollow, painted, with great staring eyes and mouths like lipless holes, miters of wood on some, flat caps on others, were the devils of various shapes and sizes which, using Hanua as their mouthpiece, gave him power among the islands. Terrible figures—degraded fancy run clean mad.

"That, boo-boo!" Hanua said, striking one with his foot. It answered with a hollow boom.

"That, fishing boo-boo!" he added. "He tell if good fishing. This, fighting boo-boo!" He kicked another. "This, love boo-boo, tell if man get flenty good wife. What *taubada* want know today?"

Wynyard hastened to explain that he wanted nothing today but to see the great wise man and hear his wisdom. In short, the pleasure of Hanua's acquaintance. But had Hanua any tusk bracelets he would like to trade? Wynyard knew these pig-tusks commanded the high price which would gratify the man if a profitable deal could be carried through.

Hanua reflected, and from a corner lifted a box. The least valuable of the tusks was produced and silently held out, the savage eyes glinting above it with a quite

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civilized and decidedly commercial greed.

Wynyard had provided himself before he came along with one or two treasures which he thought might do the trick of buying the puri-puri man. He pulled out of his pocket a necklace of green and red glass beads, a magnificent affair, finished with two long tassels of sparkling splendor to fall upon the breast. As a matter of fact Java was the maker of these surprising creations. There were sacks full of gorgeous beads aboard the *Spindrift* and she amused herself with making them up into ornaments each worth an armful of bird-skins, and destined to set the islands mad with rivalry.

The eyes glinted more brilliantly as Wynyard held this up for display against his white coat. Hanua took the necklace and passed it over his head, where it glittered on his black breast. Then, slowly, reluctantly, he tendered the tusk. He eyed the tassels lovingly as they lay.

"You good man, *taubada,* me flenty fleased. You likum see my work?"

He led the way and pointed to what in the gloom Wynyard had taken for a devil-devil.

Heavens! It was human! A human body dried, smoked, mummied, the bridge of the nose removed to give it the scowl demanded in these ancestral portraits—if so they may be called. Stiff, and with a kind of horrible dignity, it seemed with its closed eyelids to be lost in some hateful dream of past terrible pleasures of war and feast. The feet had been removed and pig's tusks substituted, and on the whole the departed more nearly resembled a real devil-devil than the wooden works of art. Wynyard restrained his disgust, and admired warmly.

"Him great chief. Him from Nuluau Island. Him stay forever now."

Wynyard asked if good pay was given and Hanua nodded content. Afraid of still more painful revelations, he prepared to depart with all the courtesies, and at the door Hanua made a gesture of respect.

"You flenty good man, *taubada.* You coming alonga me. I show you big puri-puri some day."

And Wynyard went off, followed by the respectful gaze of the natives who had gathered outside; he felt that he had done a good day's work indeed. It is well to make friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness in and out of civilization.

He told his adventures to Java that evening.

"I thought it was wise," he said apologetically as they strolled down the white beach. "After what you told me, Miss Dixon, I thought it was as well to have a friend in the native camp. I don't like those mysterious mountains and all that may be going on in the bush, and, depend upon it, Hanua is up to all their tricks. I mean to cultivate the gentleman for all I'm worth."

"I think you're right," she said slowly. "One could never make my Uncles see the need of that. They just are honest old sailormen and they despise it all for savages' foolery. But I can see it might very well be important to stand well with the man."

"It might be a matter of life and death." Wynyard's voice was serious.

There was a minute's silence. Then Java said musingly:

"Then you'd go to his puri-puri business? I can think it might be pretty ghastly."

"Of course I'd go. I'd do that or anything, anything on earth for your safety."

He could not hide the note in his voice—the note that every woman knows and responds to like a struck wire whether she cares for the man or no. How would it affect her, he asked himself in terror the moment he had spoken. Her perfect frankness shielded her as well as twenty duennas could have done.

"Thank you. I know you would, and for any one that trusted you and needed you."

Her words gave him great pleasure, but got him no farther as a lover. He sighed unheard and changed the subject to the *Spindrift's* next run to Nukulu.

But he went to the puri-puri a fortnight later, and never while he lives in this world will Wynyard forget what happened.

CONCLUSION NEXT MONTH

Impressed by Hanua's strange witchcraft, which rouses the islanders to a frenzy of terror and which even he himself cannot explain, Wynyard gets the witch-doctor's promise to warn him of danger to Java. The warning comes—with consequences that make an amazing conclusion to "The Captain Herself" in next month's McClure's.

And Ruth Said—Continued from page 37

Ruth looked at her watch. "How about something to eat?" she asked.

"You poor kid." Bobby was instantly contrite. "I should've thought of that. We'll both be the better for a cup of mocha. Where'll we go for a swell feed?"

"Why not get a bite right here. I see it's still allowed." Ruth nodded toward the decrepit little grill that stood on the edge of the bureau.

"Gee, sister, I'd like to stake you to a real table d'hôte."

"I can still sling a mean frying-pan, if you'll rustle the grub."

Bob was out and back like a whirlwind with an armful of packages.

"I got a couple of hot dogs, too, in case we couldn't wait," he laughed boyishly.

"O, sweet, sweet onions," Ruth dove into the bag. "I see—I mean I hear you been to Bermuda, Mr. Bones."

"Do them onions smell as strong as that, Mr. Tambo." He paused. "Old Pop Bayne used to spring that one regular, remember?"

They spread the feast on the trunk and laughed and chattered.

Afterwards, Ruth studied theatrical sheets, her feet on the bed, a coffee-cup in her hand.

"What're you going to do this summer, Bob?"

"I don't hardly know. I'm at liberty, that's all. Any damn thing that comes along."

"Well, here's the show boat, *Majestic,* playing the Ohio. Wants talent in all lines. Chorus, comedian, the whole works. New management. Silent Bill Fraser. Why, Bob, that's a swell proposition. The pay isn't big but it's cakes, too, and pretty much a vacation. Don't you remember the summer we played the *River Queen.* It was swell. Don't you remember!"

"Yes, I remember. But this would be different. There was two of us, then. Nope, I think I'll stick to the towns. Floating along, listening to the tree-toads changing their minds, would just about put me cuckoo."

"It's going it alone, big boy, that gets you?" she asked gently.

"Yeah, just that. Honest, kid, you don't know what it's been." His hand went up again and fingered his lips. "I—I can stand it all right in towns, but not on the boats——" He sprang to his feet and walked about to regain his composure, and Ruth, heart-sick, saw him take a tablet from his vest pocket and swallow it. In the length of time it took him to stride to the end of the crowded room and back she had made her decision. Bob needed her. She could put Trev off for a few month's more—would do it anyway, even if it made him sore.

"Bob," she said, with the air of one who lays her cards upon the table, "I just got to tell you. I've come back. I—if you'll take me. I'd like to work with you again. If not I'll go into the chorus on that show boat. Even if it doesn't mean much money it's sure."

"Why, Ruth," he said, deeply moved, "I didn't know. I thought everything was all to the good. What's wrong? Tell the old man."

Ruth's eyes filled with real tears and she covered her face with her hands. Bob patted her shorn head clumsily.

"I've not been very well." Her cheeks, scrubbed of their make-up confirmed the words. "And back in my mind I kept thinking of getting out here with you and maybe starting like we did that time on the *River Queen.* Just to laze along, Bob, the whole summer through."

"You poor little cuss! Why didn't you wire? Any time at all, I'm always here, ready and willing."

"I know, Bobby, I know."

"We'll wire, kid, right away. Anything Bill has to offer. It needn't to matter, Ruthie . . ."

So Bob went off immediately to send the wire. Ruth listened to him clattering down the stairs. He was whistling.

Ruth found Bob's doctor in when

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she called at his office a little later. He was an unpleasant-looking creature with discolored teeth. It was evident he had a lucrative practise.

"Have you been treating Bobby Blake, the song and dance man?" she demanded without preliminaries.

"I have rather an extensive practise among the profession," he countered, his eyes shifting toward the door. "I can't just say without looking at my files."

"Well, then, I'll say for you. You are. You began feeding him dope from the first time you got your dirty mitts on him. You knew him for an old-timer. When the flu left him shot him to pieces and he wandered into your hands you began doping him. Just a little to keep him under your thumb. Five a throw. And they hang men for clean murder!"

"Look here, my girl——"

"I been looking," Ruth answered shortly. "It took Bobby Blake years to get away from the snow, after he'd gotten the habit from another bone-picker like you. And when all he needed was a little tonic you started giving him slow poison so you could be sure of his money. And he made you swear it wasn't dope . . . Oh, God! Why don't I kill you!"

"I only have to call, you know. There are other people on this floor."

"If you make a sound you'll be sorry," Ruth's voice rose threateningly. "I can make it hot for you . . . You got Bobby Blake into this and you can get him out. What's he been taking?"

"Just a mild sedative."

"Well, it's dope, whatever it is. You've had to increase it, too. I know how he went before. A little more and a little more. He's going away on a long vacation this summer where there won't be a pill-peddler anywhere around. The life he will lead will help him but he'll need something. You'll have to fix him up a kit that will cure him. I want him to get it from you because he believes you're square. I don't want him to think anything else, see? And to be sure you aren't queering us I'll take the stuff to a real doctor and have the low-down on it." She studied him intently for an instant. "If you do anything phoney—but I don't think you will. If you squeal on me when he comes in here tomorrow it will be your last squeal." And she was gone.

The doctor hunted himself a drink. He had heard of bobbed-haired bandits but this was his first experience with one.

THE *Majestic* docked at the town of Mammoth. It was there Bobby and Ruth joined out, going abroad amidst the stares of the country folk.

Ruth surveyed the half-dozen chimneys visible above the hilly shore-line for a moment, then entered the little stateroom that was to be her dressing-room too.

"Some town," she said to Mrs. Fraser, the wife of "Silent Bill."

"Just wait till night," the captain's wife replied. "When the whole countryside streams in you'll think you're playing a Broadway house."

Ruth struck a light for her cigaret and looked about her disconsolately.

"I must ask you, girlie," Mrs. Fraser said kindly, "to be careful about the smokes. It just takes a little thing like that to give a boat like this a bad name."

Ruth stared blankly through the curling wreaths of smoke. "Good Lord," she whispered to herself. This was going to be worse than she feared. When Bob, aglow with enthusiasm, came up from the tow-boat where the single men had their quarters, she turned her head so that he might not see her wet cheeks.

In addition to doing a twenty minute turn Ruth had to take her place in the chorus. She had rehearsed after a fashion with the other girls and the simple steps were easy even on the cramped stage. But the costumes were for ponies and Ruth was in the show-girl class. Even in her earliest days she felt that she had never cut so ludicrous a figure as she did arrayed in the flimsy bit of satin and gilt braid.

Mrs. Fraser came rustling up, arrayed in cloth of gold for her opening number. "Dearie," she said after a brief survey, "how would it be if you'd wear a ribbon head-band or something, to kind of hide the bareness in the back of your neck."

Ruth gasped. "Why, that cut cost me five bucks! It's the last word from Paris."

"Maybe so, but it doesn't go on the Ohio. We got to be awful careful. Everything must be censored. Did Gus go over your songs?"

Ruth nodded mutely. She was past speech.

WITH Mrs. Fraser's help she concocted a head-dress of a sort to cover her shorn locks, leaving the perky ringlets showing in front. She looked very droll and old-fashioned, and went on the stage helpless with baffled rage and chagrin.

The house was packed. And it seemed as if there were babies in all directions. Babies who crowed and gurgled, and babies who cried, and babies who toddled up and down the aisle. Ruth did not believe she had ever played to a noisier house. Or a more responsive one.

Bob and Ruth came on well toward the closing, in what was the best spot on the bill. As they danced on, Ruth breathed something that was between a prayer and an imprecation. She knew that she had never looked worse.

Bobby was a good dancer and Ruth found the steps easily, but they could not do their best with the orchestration they were furnished. The littered stage was particularly disconcerting. Twice Ruth rammed the back drop, and a few people in front tittered.

The suppressed laughter was too much for Ruth. Hot waves of anger shot through her. She took her bows with murder in her heart. The poor little bunch of hillbillies! Her rage was such a personal thing that she could feel her fingers curling about the thick neck of a fat customer well down in front. Bobby sensed something of her humiliation and patted her arm with a kindly clumsy hand.

"It'll go better next time," he whispered.

"There's not going to be a next time," Ruth replied between clenched teeth, but the opening of her next number drowned her voice.

This time she looked out belligerently over the crowded little house, daring them to do their worst. A few who caught her stormy glance stirred uncomfortably. She had subtly lost the sympathy of her audience. When she went into her dance she did not get much of a hand. Bobby coming on near the finish gave Ruth a chance to get off for a quick change.

She used one of her own gowns and climbed into it thankfully. Its copper sheen matched her hair; and after an instant's hesitation she jerked off the absurd bandeau, standing a svelte figure in the huddle of the tiny dressing-room.

As she faced her audience Ruth's fighting blood was up. She had routed indifference before with sheer youth and daring. With a twinkle in the direction of Gus, the pianist, she cracked her rhinestone-studded heels together. Then she proceeded to sell the Charleston for the first time to an Ohio River audience!

It is doubtful if Gus himself knew exactly what she was doing. But he jazzed it up to the best of his ability, with Ruth imploring him to step on it. The fat man down in front leaned forward with newly awakened interest; some young bloods cheered; the hand she got at the finish was light at first but ardent. She had sold her stuff all right. They called her back again and again, and when Bobby came on, they two finished to the accompaniment of an insistent hand that was for Ruth.

After the show the Frasers called the team into their room for a conference.

"What's the good word?" Bobby asked.

"Well," Mrs. Fraser cleared her throat, glancing at her silent husband, "the show boat is a queer end of the business and no mistake. It's hard to get next to. I been in it fifteen years and I know. Time was when the only women at the show was on the stage, and when you went up in town the people looked like they were going to sic the dogs on you. For any one the least bit refined it was fierce. It's different now. We give a reception Saturday after the matinee and I've got three babies named for me right here in Mammoth. There ain't a thing on the show that any one could object to. We say on our billing, 'For the whole family,' and that's what we mean.

"Now that turn you done tonight, dearie, was classy. I know class when I see it and it had class. But it won't go out here. We'll tone down your costumes a little and I've got a blonde wig that you can redress so that it will look sweet. And you can work up some soft shoe stuff that'll be a little more refined than your other dance. You'll soon get what we want."

"Mrs. Fraser," Ruth's hand was trembling as she took her cigaret from her lips, "I wouldn't stay on this hick scow another twelve hours to save my soul from purgatory. I'm through! Maybe you've heard of a street called Broadway. Well, that's where I got the dance that shocked your moss-backs and I'm going back to it as fast as an express will carry me. If there's no trains I'll walk!"

Flinging herself across the hall, Ruth banged the door of her room shut and threw herself upon the bed sobbing stormily. A few minutes later Bobby came in and crossed to her side.

"Ruth," he said softly, "listen child. You mustn't take on like this. It ain't

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$50
IN ONE DAY

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$70
IN ONE DAY

Makes
$90
IN ONE DAY

Makes
$120
IN ONE DAY

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worth it. You'll make yourself sick. What do you need care—we know you're good stuff. It wouldn't do to jump the show like that. It wouldn't be square. We'll work out our notice and we'll then blow, see?"

"Bobby," Ruth's voice still trembled with tears, "I'd die before I'd go on before that bunch of seeds again. Wear a blonde wig, can I; so I won't hurt their refined feelings? Oh, Lord. Leave me be, I'm sick."

"Now, sweetie," Mrs. Fraser had entered, and stood looking down at Ruth, "you get a night's sleep on this before you do anything desperate. You got your partner all up in the air, him thinking you was so nicely fixed and all."

Ruth sniffed and rolled over, turning her back upon Bobby. "Well," she said grudgingly, "I'll sleep on it."

The next morning after breakfast she asked meekly enough for the blonde wig and spent an hour trying to straighten its tangles. Mrs. Fraser herself helped fill in the neck of the copper gown which lost all its verve worn in conjunction with the blonde wig.

THE long, lazy days filled with sunshine and fresh air, the good food at regular intervals, worked wonders with Bobby. Ruth admitted herself that her own nerves were not so jumpy.

But that did not prevent her from being lonely. When the sun began to slant toward the hills there fell over the world a poignant sadness that, with the first honk of frogs and the last sleepy twitter of the nesting birds, drove her almost mad. She sat in her stateroom and smoked a great many cigarets, occasionally taking a hand in a crap game with the other members of the troupe. To be with Bobby was no particular pleasure for he merely sat and fished, hissing warningly at the slightest sound.

At the beginning of the second week she sent a wire, feeling she had to have definite assurance of the future. The answer was lengthy and left no reason for doubt that the butter and egg man stood ready at any time to be her good angel. Ruth tucked his telegram in a corner of her make-up box, not quite ready to tell Bobby.

Thursday night of that week was very hot off stage. The actors wrapped towels about their necks to save collars and to stanch the maddening trickle of perspiration.

After the show Bobby, looking very fagged, led Ruth up to the texas cabin on the top deck. The vibration of the engine made the whole boat seem aquiver with the day's heat. But on the stern side of the pilot-house a breeze had sprung up, and it was a little cooler.

"How does it go," Bobby asked, stretching out full length on the deck which was still warm and tarry.

"It's nice up here," Ruth said.

"You like it better, kid?"

"Well . . . yes, I s'pose I do."

"I'm glad. I'll maybe be able to stick it out if you do. I'm about fed up on it. This heat is fierce and then it's so damned monotonous. A little of it's all right but . . . I don't know . . . too much scenery I guess. And ain't these rube houses enough to get your goat?"

"Where would you go, Bobby, back to Springfield?"

"Sure. I'd try to get on a show somewhere." He paused and added wistfully, "If you still wanted to team——"

"I kind of hate to think of you back there," Ruth said. "This is so much better for you. You sleep all right now, don't you?"

"Like the dead. I forget where I put the pills I brought for my nerves."

"I thought, maybe . . . you'd stay on even if I did jump the show."

"Not a chance." Bobby shook his head. "I'm ready to go right now."

There was a long silence. Finally Ruth said, "I—I think I'll go back to New York."

"Now, listen!" Bob sat suddenly upright. "Don't you ever get it into your head that you got to stick with me. If you want to go, kid, don't hesitate a minute. I'll give you whatever we draw for these two weeks and maybe I could stake you some. Not much, but some."

"Don't you think of it, Bobby." Her voice broke.

"Don't do that, Ruthie. Don't cry."

"LEAVE me be." She wrenched away from his grasp. "It's this heat . . . I'm going." she stood up, suddenly determined. "It's darn foolishness for me to hold out on you any longer. We might as well get it straight. It don't pay to be soft; every one's got to look out for themselves. Well—I've got something pretty good waiting for me, Bobby."

There was a long pause. Finally Bob said in a quiet voice: "Then that song and dance about your being hard up and all—that was just applesauce?"

Ruth looked down on him, her face softening. "I did it to get you out, Bobby; out of the hole you was in. I thought a summer like this would put you on your feet. And it would, if only you'd stick. But you ain't going to and so I guess . . . I think I'd better look after Number One."

"That's it," Bobby said harshly. "Look out for Number One."

"I'm going to draw some real coin and I'll make it up to you." Her voice trembled. "I'll square it, honest to God I will!"

"Like hell!" He turned on her. "I've never took nothing yet I didn't earn, and I'm not starting now. I don't need any hand-outs."

"Oh, all righty." She tossed her head and swung away from him. "If that's the way you feel——"

"Don't go, Ruthie," he pleaded, contrite. "Stay and talk. I didn't mean to make you sore. I know you'd share with me. Give me the layout."

"Well"—she was glad at last to be able to tell it—"It's supper club work . . . through a friend, see? I get publicity and a star part; the bally will give me a shove-off that will lead to something big. My share of the jack will be worth carrying home. Oh, I'll be made, all right. I've landed a butter and egg man that can see me through and not know he's spent a nickel. Wouldn't I be a simp to pass it up?"

"Let me get this straight." His voice was stern. "Some guy is going to rustle the coin and set you up in a swell joint. A swell booze joint. That what you mean?"

"Well, what's on the hip isn't our business. That's not my end of it. I put on the show."

"And this guy that's backing you——"

"He's a personal friend of mine. Heavy with gold."

"Listen to me, Ruthie!" Bob had gotten to his feet and he towered above her. "Is——are you sweeties? Come clean, now. I've got to know. Is he your daddy?" He seized her by the shoulders.

"Don't, Bobby Blake, you're hurting me. Let loose my arm!"

"You answer me!"

"Leave me be. I'll not tell if I don't want to."

"Yes, you will. I've got to know whether you're the same as most of 'em . . . Frails, just frails!"

"You hurt me . . . You! I won't stand it."

"Bah! I'm through," he pushed her from him. "You come to me with a song and dance and I believe you, and all the time you're planning this—this damnable thing."

She ran the length of the cabin and stumbled down to the lower deck, crying softly. Bob stood motionless and cursed to himself.

"O, Lord, Lord," he groaned. And it was nearer a prayer than he knew.

THE next morning Ruth sought refuge in the cool, dim, little auditorium. It was here Mrs. Fraser found her.

"I know," she said fanning herself vigorously, "that you and Bob have had some trouble. I don't know what about and I don't care, but I am going to ask you to take our side of it into consideration and work tonight's show and the double bill tomorrow. We can't possibly get a team out here before then. Your partner will if you will, and I ask it as a favor . . . What's the good word?" She waited anxiously.

"All right," Ruth said listlessly. "I'll stick till Sunday."

"That's the girlie." Mrs. Fraser patted her shoulder and hurried away.

Sunday morning the boat paused on its way up the river to allow Ruth to disembark. Bobby did not appear and Ruth thought it probable that he had left after the night show, to avoid the embarrassment of leaving with her. She waved to the troupe, who had arisen early to say good-bye, and stood apathetically waiting for the rickety little truck that was to transport her and her luggage cross-country to catch the Eastern Flyer.

The ride to the station was very hot, the stuffy waiting-room unbearable. Upon learning that she had an hour's wait for her train, Ruth, with true trouper's sanguinity, threw the coat she carried across her luggage and strolled off. A little clump of trees down the street promised shade, a slight relief from the scorching heat. She continued toward them not realizing, until she came upon an old-fashioned iron fence, that they stood in a churchyard alongside a little chapel.

After an instant's hesitation she opened the gate and went in.

It was very still. Occasionally through the open chapel windows the minister's voice could be heard, droning out his morning sermon. The Sunday hush, the

measured, indistinguishable words, brought Ruth a certain peace. She thought of a song she used to sing when she was a kid, "Somebody's Darling." On the cover of the music sheets was the picture of a tombstone—a child's tombstone, carved with a marble lamb. Bobby had taught her that song.

It came to her suddenly how much a part of her life he had always been. Back even before Aunt Belle abandoned her, leaving her with an unpaid board bill to the tender mercies of a landlady. Bob had not cared because she was long and homely and awkward. He had taken her on anyhow and taught her all she knew . . . All she knew.

Her reflections were broken by the faint clang of the gate. She raised a dizzy head at the sound. A man in a rumpled dark suit had come in—why, it was Bobby. He threaded his way aimlessly between the graves. It was evident he hadn't seen her.

She started to call to him. Then she remembered drearily that he hadn't wanted to see her again; that he had gone off without a word. Well . . . he would catch sight of her soon. She could say good-bye, anyway.

She got to her feet, wondering that she felt so wretched. He did not hear her approach. He was leaning against an old pine tree, looking moodily at the ground. Hesitantly she touched his arm.

"Won't you say good-bye?" she asked.

He turned and stared at her unseeingly for a moment.

"Good-bye, Ruth," he said finally, "and good luck."

"Good-bye," she echoed. For a moment she hesitated, then went on.

At the gate she paused and looked back. He had walked down between the graves toward the little brick church. It was the last time she was going to see him. This parting was final! Suddenly she knew that she could not stand it.

Swiftly she ran after him. "Bobby," she called, "Bobby, wait for me."

He turned and waited.

"I can't leave you," she whispered. "I can't." And she began to cry, standing before him like a little girl, her face turned up to his.

"DON'T kid yourself," he said finally and his eyes were cold. "You'll do very well, I guess."

"I swear, Bobby, it will kill me. You're all I got. You're mine. I tried to leave but I can't . . . I can't."

"I thought once," he said, "that we maybe meant something to each other. But I was wrong. Dead wrong." He went on toward the church, leaving Ruth motionless.

She followed him, her pride trailing in the dust.

"Listen," she said. "You've got to listen, Bobby. I can't stand it. You can't throw me down like this. I tried to kid myself into thinking that I could do a single if I wanted to; but I had to come back. I fought against it but I had to come. Even when I was dating up with the butter and egger I knew that I could never keep my bargain. It's not that I'm so damn good, Bobby. It's just that I'm yours. You got to believe me. You *got* to!"

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Bobby shrugged his shoulders. "How can I, when you spring phoney stuff all along the line."

"Look at me, Bob!" She faced him. "You must know I'm straight, you've got to know it."

He shook his head.

"And you need me," she clasped his arm with her hands. That's why I've got to stick to you, Bob—we can't either of us do a single."

"It wouldn't be fair, kid." Bobby avoided her pleading eyes. "If you've got anywhere it wouldn't be right to haul you back to the sticks. I apologize for what I said. You've got to have a chance."

"But I tell you I don't want it. I've tried a single and it won't work."

They had wandered along beside the church, absorbed, forgetting the world about them. Suddenly, from an open window just above their heads, a voice came to them, the grave voice of an unseen speaker:

"And Ruth said, entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee . . ."

It was the voice of the minister summing up his sermon; but to the pair outside the window it was like a message from above.

"God help us," Bobby groaned and took Ruth in his arms.

He Married a Chorus Girl—Continued from page 25

and her lawyer, "Old Bessemer," together with the inevitable Alice, met in a one-sided conference in the Vanderloon library.

Mrs. Vanderloon, erect as usual in her high-backed chair, her ebony cane gripped fiercely in her hand, held the floor.

"That girl," she said, "will never enter this house; and unless Peter consents to divorce her, Peter himself will not enter this house either. When Peter comes, Mr. Bessemer, it will be your business to explain to him how he may obtain his divorce—coercion, false representations on her part—don't care a fig how it's done."

"I repeat," said Old Bessemer with an attempt at firmness, "I repeat that if your son is amenable the divorce can be obtained—at a price. A woman of the character of Miss—er—West will certainly listen to what I might term 'the golden argument'."

Mrs. Vanderloon had given one rap of what she intended to be a series of raps with her ebony cane, when Bradford, the second footman, coughed at the door and announced Mr. Peter Vanderloon.

"Ask him to come in," said Mrs. Vanderloon in a curiously faint voice.

"Hi, mother," Peter called from the hall. They could hear his decisive footsteps crossing the parquet floor. He entered, smiling, cheerful, aglow.

But at sight of Old Bessemer all the light left his face. He advanced frowning a little to kiss his mother on the forehead. Then he said, "Hello, Alice," briefly, and bowed to the lawyer.

"Well," he said, "I'm here."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Vanderloon, "so we see. You've made a pretty big idiot of yourself, haven't you, Peter?"

He raised his eyebrows. "In what way?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Vanderloon wearily, "you know as well as I do—your marriage."

"Marriage," he asserted, "is a state entered upon by a great many people who are presumably not idiots. Please be good enough to say just what you mean, mother. It will save time—yours and mine and Mr. Bessemer's. But perhaps he is here professionally, in which case—"

"Mr. Bessemer is, as you've so astutely divined, here in a professional capacity," said Mrs. Vanderloon. "We have been discussing how we can best get you out of the mess you've got yourself into."

"I'm in no mess."

"Peter, don't be a mule. I don't know why you married this girl, I admit, but there is one thing I'm sure of and that is that you're sorry now you did."

"You are wrong. I'm very glad I did."

"Oh," cried Mrs. Vanderloon, "now you're just being chivalrous! You feel yourself obliged to stick by a bad bargain. But you're not obliged to, Peter. Mr. Bessemer says that he can undoubtedly secure a divorce."

"Over my dead body he can," said Peter.

"I take it," put in the lawyer, "that you do not desire a divorce?"

"You take it right, Mr. Bessemer. And I really don't see any reason for detaining you any longer."

Old Bessemer glanced at Mrs. Vanderloon who nodded her head slightly. The lawyer arose in dignity, bowed, and left them, trying his best not to look like a child who has been sent to the nursery. When he had gone Mrs. Vanderloon unbent a little; and in a voice that was friendly, almost confidential, continued:

"Now that we are alone—alone except for Alice, who is one of us—we can talk calmly and sensibly about this unfortunate affair. You must understand, Peter, that although I was very angry with you at first I am no longer so much angry as sorry; and I will help you in any way I can to—to extricate you. Now, frankly, between ourselves, the woman is of course impossible?"

Peter stared at the old lady so long that he almost disconcerted her. When he spoke there was an angry weariness in his voice.

"In the first place," he said, "you will please not call my wife 'that woman.' In the second place my wife is not impossible. She is a very charming and delightful person or I shouldn't have married her."

THEN Mrs. Vanderloon made a grave mistake, for she said shortly: "Oh, you'd been drinking no doubt. That's the way those mésalliances generally happen."

"That," snapped Peter, "is inexcusable of you."

As was so often the case, his temper kindled hers, and her voice hitherto hard and bitter became shrill.

"Inexcusable of me! And what do you think you are to call me inexcusable? What do you think you are—you, a Vanderloon, a decent, well-born, well-bred gentleman—to go and pick out of the chorus some—some——"

"Careful!" warned Peter, white at the lips.

She had just enough sense left to heed him, but the effort of self-control set her head to shaking and her ebony cane to rapping. You could see her swallowing her wrath. Peter got up as if to go.

"You can go," she choked, her head still bobbing, "you can go. But if you leave me like this you need never come back—never, do you understand?"

There was a silence disturbed only by the distressful sound of hard breathing. Then Peter said: "I am going now. When you change your mind and are willing to be civil you can always reach me at the club. Good-bye."

Once more they heard his footsteps crossing the parquet floor. An interval, and then the gentle clang of the heavy iron door.

Alice, her eyes too blurred to execute her needlepoint, looked up at Mrs. Vanderloon. The old lady was sitting up very straight in her high chair, her mouth grim and indomitable. But Alice saw that the yellow hand that clutched the ebony cane was not quite steady.

WHEN Winona questioned her husband about that interview with his mother he put as cheerful a face on the affair as was possible.

"It's all right, my love," he assured her repeatedly, "it's quite all right. The old lady's just obstinate, that's all. She has a one track mind and she hasn't come to a switch yet. But if you think I'm worrying you're very much mistaken."

Winona, however, who had come to know her husband, was sure that Peter was worried. He worried not for himself but because of the slight that had been put upon his wife. She wondered what she ought to do—what she could do.

And then one evening she ran into her disreputable old father.

She had been calling on an actress friend in the Times Square district—you mustn't forget she was of the stage—and was dodging her way across Broadway when she was arrested in her progress by two hands on the back of her shoulders. Facing about a little indignantly, she confronted her father.

To her relief he was not very drunk, exhilirated only, he would have said, and he was not in the least shabby. It was astonishing the way that man found money when he took the trouble to look for it, she reflected.

But there he was, well set up in spite of long and, for him at least, not unpleasant years of dissipation, seventy years old and bright-eyed, ruddy-skinned and cheerfully mellow as a man twenty years younger. Alcohol in frequent instances preserves.

"Well met, my daughter!" he cried in his best grand manner. "I've spent many a weary day looking for you. Missed you at Wilkesbarre by an eyelash, and then

read in the paper that you'd gone and married yourself to a Vanderloon and had moved to New York to take your rightful position among the leaders of society. I can't say I envy you, because they're brainless asses, all of them. Still, it was if you'll excuse my saying it a splendid financial coup."

Winona, perfectly aware that her father was an old rascal, was aware, too, that he knew it. But there was some quality about the man, his jauntiness, his debonairness, his humorous complacency, that since childhood she had found irresistible. Moreover, he was patently well-bred and at least decently educated; more so, alas, than her wholly admirable mother.

"Come," she said with a hand on his elbow, "we can't stand talking here. Take me somewhere for a bite."

"I was about to suggest it," he said. "I have a flask—a small flask, to be sure—in my pocket."

She could not help smiling.

"I said a bite," she reminded him.

They secured a remote table in a nearby restaurant. Winona ordered an ice and her father a split of White Rock and a tall glass with cracked ice.

"You seem very prosperous, father," observed Winona.

"Yes," he said, "yes. But my position is a precarious one of which you would doubtless not approve. I am what is known as a steerer for a temple of chance, if you know what that means. I introduce young men of means to a friend of mine who operates a roulette wheel. Now, your husband, young Vanderloon—I wonder if he is at all interested in roulette—well, we'll discuss that more fully when I meet him. What I am interested to discuss at present is you and your marriage. Are you happy, my dear? Is your husband good to you?"

"I'm very happy," she said, "and Peter is very good to me."

"Splendid! And how about your mother-in-law, Mrs. Alberich Vanderloon—how do you get along with her?"

Winona was spared the necessity of an immediate reply by the arrival of the waiter with his tray. When they had been served she turned to her father and said: "You seem to be pretty well informed about my recent marriage, father."

"Oh," he answered with a wave of his hand, "I read it up in the papers. They printed your husband's complete geneology. Naturally. He has three asterisks in the social Baedeker. Tell me, now, how do you like Mrs. Alberich Vanderloon?"

"I don't know her," answered Winona evenly.

"You don't know her! My dear child, you don't know her! Don't know your own mother-in-law! Why, you amaze me. I must beseech you to explain. Tell your old father what the trouble is."

"I think," she said not unkindly, "that my old father is plenty clever enough to guess what the trouble is."

He smote his forehead with a dramatic palm. Then, with a far more natural gesture, he reached for his glass and took a large swallow of the high-ball which he had prepared for himself.

"You don't mean to tell me," he exclaimed, "that Mrs. Alberich Vanderloon refuses to receive you! It can't be that!"

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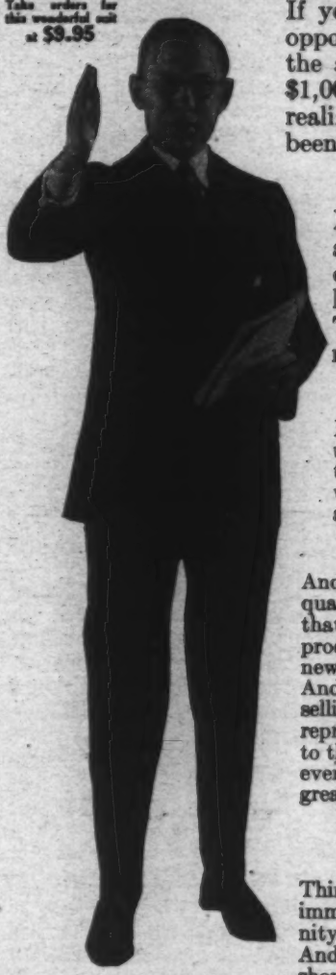

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"Oh, yes it can," said Winona. "I suppose you think I mind, but I don't—except for Peter's sake. It hurts him, of course, and what hurts him hurts me."

"Spoken like a true and loving wife," said her father unctuously. Winona smiled at his deliberately obvious flattery.

"Win," he said after an interval, "we must see what can be done to remedy this unfortunate state of affairs. Yes, we must see what can be done. It is possible that your old father may be able to help you."

"But, father," she protested a little alarmed, "what on earth can you possibly do about it?"

He shrugged his shoulders magnificently. "One never knows," he said, "one never knows.

"I know how to handle people, Winona," he continued. "It's a knack, that's all, and I happen to have it. I should have made a splendid diplomat, I believe. Now, here in New York I have influence; I have friends——"

"Gamblers!" she interjected.

"Granted. Gamblers. They are very loyal friends, gamblers are. But I have other friends, Win. All I ask is, at most, forty-eight hours to fix up this little misunderstanding for you. Give me that and I have every reason to believe that I'll have you on the inside of the door of Mrs. Alberich Vanderloon's house. What do you say, my dear?"

She hesitated, but the old scamp's confidence in himself carried conviction.

"Very well, father," she said at last, "only please don't make trouble."

"Trouble!" he echoed. "I intend not to make trouble but to end it."

He turned and beckoned to the waiter.

"L'addition, s'il vous plait," he said grandly, with an accent that he might have acquired at Yale.

THE next afternoon at a quarter past five Winona's father presented himself at the door of Mrs. Vanderloon's chateau on Fifth Avenue.

Bradford answered his ring at the bell.

"I happen to have no card with me," said Winona's father, "but you will be good enough to inform Mrs. Vanderloon that Mr. Richard Ormiston is calling?"

He waited in the hall while his message was being delivered. He was a shade nervous and would doubtless have been more so had he not been stabilized by several high-balls.

Presently Bradford returned. Mrs. Vanderloon requested that Mr. Ormiston wait a few moments in the reception room.

"Ah," thought Winona's father, "she's getting rid of her guests. Afraid to have them see me, no doubt. I'll wager she asked that footman whether I looked like a tramp."

That Mrs. Vanderloon was indeed getting rid of her guests was proved by the sounds from the adjacent hall—voices and openings and shuttings of the big front door. And it was not long before Bradford reappeared to conduct him to the library.

Mrs. Vanderloon was alone in the room, the faithful Alice, even, having been dismissed. In two score years the old lady had probably not known such agitation as the name of Richard Ormiston had roused in her amazed and perturbed soul.

When he stood before her, she scarcely dared raise her eyes.

"Molly," he said with just the right touch of feeling.

"Dick!" She looked up at him now to make certain it was really he. "I—I can't believe it. I can't believe it."

"Oh, yes, you can, Molly," he said easily. "I haven't changed as much as all that."

She smiled wanly. Her tired old hands were shaking so that the ebony cane rattled distressingly against the arm of her high chair.

"No," she said unsteadily, "no, you haven't changed much, Dick. What—what have you been doing with yourself all these years?"

"I? Oh, I'm an agriculturist—in a small way, of course, a very small way. And what, may I ask, Molly, have you been doing besides gracing New York society as you always have done so beautifully—so splendidly?"

She shook her head musingly.

"Very little else, Dick," she answered. "What else is there that an old woman can do?"

He was on the point of observing that an old woman can be charitable to her daughter-in-law, but checked himself in time; he must not be premature, must work up to his climax by easy stages. Instead he said: "You're not an old woman, Molly—never was, and never will be. Look at me! I'm older than you, but I don't admit my age even to myself."

"You're married, Dick?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed, and a full-grown daughter."

"Ah," said she. And then she added: "I should like to know your daughter some day."

Once more he curbed his impulse to speak out. He laughed gently.

"Now, Molly," he said, "you're just being sentimental. You have no idea whether you'd like to meet my daughter or not; any more than I have any idea whether I'd care to meet your son or not. I believe you have a son?"

Mrs. Vanderloon immediately straightened herself up in her chair, hard lines appearing about the corners of her thin mouth.

"I have a son," she admitted, "but I prefer not to talk about him. He has been a great disappointment to me."

"I'm sorry. Children so often are that, aren't they? And through no fault of theirs."

"Just what do you mean—through no fault of theirs?" she demanded.

"Well, they so often behave in the way that they think is right but we think is wrong. What a disappointment parents must often be to their children, too! Did you ever stop to consider that?"

"Dick," she said severely, "you're talking like a fool—but then you always did talk like a fool."

"I suppose," he said brightly, "that that's because I always was a fool. If I hadn't been a fool, Molly, you never would have married Vance—*de mortuis* and all that, of course."

"Maybe—" she said slowly, "maybe we both were fools. It is too late now to be certain."

He made a brusque, abrupt gesture of his arm. Here was his chance. Plunge in and reminisce with her—soften her, render her pliable to his purpose.

To his bewilderment he found himself adopting no such course. What he did say astonished him more, probably, than it did her; for he gave a hearty laugh and cried: "Don't you believe it, Molly. You were no fool. On the contrary, you were a hard-headed, hard-hearted, far-seeing young lady who knew what side her bread was buttered on, and who took good care to choose the buttered side. I've an idea that you've not changed much either, Molly. This business of your son, for example. Tell me about that. What did he do that you object to so much?"

She sighed and shifted in her chair.

"Oh," she said, "the usual thing. He married a chorus girl and refused to give her up."

"Yes," said he blandly, "but I asked what he did that you object to?"

"What more could he do?" she retorted.

"Well, he might *not* have married her, for instance."

"Oh!". She shrugged her shoulders.

"Do they love each other?" he persevered.

"They claim to. They always claim to—at first."

"Do you know the girl?"

"I most certainly do not. I've forbidden both her and my son to come to the house. She's undoubtedly common."

"Listen, Molly," he continued patiently, "tell me exactly what you mean by common."

"You know perfectly well what I mean. I mean she's low-born, ill-bred."

"But suppose she weren't either? You aren't sure that she is, you merely assume it because she earns her living on the stage. And another thing—how old is your son?"

"Twenty-eight."

"A man old enough to possess judgment and taste and common sense. Have you any reason to believe that with his name and his money and a million young females to choose from he would choose one of the worst?"

"I suppose she tricked him into it."

"But it would be difficult, I should think, for her or anybody else to trick him into staying in it. You'll grant that, won't you?"

Slowly she turned her head to regard him. His earnestness puzzled her. It was unlike him to be in earnest about anything.

"Dick," she asked, "just why do you take such an absurd interest in my son and in his—his unfortunate wife?"

"Probably," he said, "because you have condemned the girl without a hearing. You're being hard-headed and hard-hearted, Molly, just as you used to be. Haven't you learned anything in all these years? Haven't thirty odd years been able to teach you a thing?"

"At least," she replied grimly, "They've not been able to teach me to clasp a chorus girl to my bosom."

"Evidently not. The Vanderloon name is too sacred, I suppose, and the Vanderloon blood too blue for that—and," he added after a pause, "the Vanderloon bosom too hard.

"Listen to me, Molly," Ormiston con-

tinued. "I know what I'm talking about. I myself married a woman out West whose name you won't find in any Social Register. And yet she's a better woman than you are, Molly, and a far more useful one to the world. She doesn't even know that there's such a thing as Society in America, and I'm damned if I think there's such a thing, either. You and I can look back on a few generations of culture and breeding, but that's the most we can do. Some of your best friends can't do even as much as that. And yet you dare to arrogate for yourself a position above certain other people who are now doing exactly what your own great-great-great-grandfather did—earning a precarious living and sweating to do it."

MRS. VANDERLOON pounded on the floor with her cane. "Let them sweat," she snapped, "as much as they want. Only I don't choose to have them sweating in my house."

Ormiston looked at her in silence and nodded his head impressively several times. Then he sighed.

"Molly," he said, "you're a cheap imitation of Marie Antoinette, and in due time you'll get yours."

"Dick, you are talking like a Bolshevist or something," asserted Mrs. Vanderloon. "Is that what the West did for you?"

"I can thank the West for a great many things," he replied.

"For what can you thank it?"

"For my daughter, Molly."

The old lady nodded. "Yes," she agreed, "I can understand how she might be charming—with her father's good blood in her veins."

He was discouraged by now, too discouraged to bother to argue longer. So he said quite casually: "My daughter's very charming indeed. I suppose that's why your son married her."

Mrs. Vanderloon drew in one short, gasping breath, and her ebony cane thumped against the carved arm of her chair.

"Are you—are you telling the truth?" she asked unsteadily.

"I am. Winona's my daughter—Winona West. I took the name of West when you and Vance packed me out there. Vance, as you know, was a good deal of a prig and was afraid I might soil the lily-white name of Ormiston; exactly as you are now afraid that my daughter will soil the lily-white name of Vanderloon."

All this last Mrs. Vanderloon seemed to ignore.

"I wish I had known," was what she said.

He was angry with her by now, angry enough to be brutal.

"Oh," he said disgustedly, "you wish you'd known! Why, you never even gave yourself a chance to find out. I suppose the fact that Winona has some precious Ormiston blood in her veins makes all the difference. Well, let me tell you that she might have buckets of Ormiston blood in her and still be a—rotter. If it were a case of like father, like daughter she would be a rotter. You ought to know!"

Mrs. Vanderloon recovered her temporarily shattered control with a supreme effort. She tried to speak gruffly.

"Pshaw! You may be dissipated but you're not common, and you know it as

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The READY-SET Marceller Can't Go Wrong

Regardless of what texture hair you have, the *Ready-Set Marceller* never fails. It will delight you. It comes in two parts. One for the side of the head as shown in illustration. The other for the opposite side and back. It is adjustable for those who prefer the back shingle bob with sides waved. The secret of the *Ready-Set* is the folding crossbar which "automatically" puts each one of the flexible combs in the hair at the proper angle flat to the head and in the proper place to give a perfect marcel. The crossbar works bellows fashion. When you close up the crossbar the hair [which should be dampened] works up between the combs forming beautiful waves.

The *Ready-Set* must not be confused with cloth waving caps—hot oil—hot irons—or intricate adjustment of combs. It is automatic, self-waving, self-adjusted silver-like waver with flexible special made combs. It weighs but a few ounces; comfortable to put on; nothing to get out of order; produces an automatically perfect marcel.

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Note: For re-setting permanents there is nothing better or more economical than *Ready-Set*. If you have a permanent you need one. Ideal for retracing. For those with naturally curly hair who use the Finger wave, the *Ready-Set* will delight you. It is a way to safely marcel white hair. It gives the perfect wave to any type of hair.

These Pictures Tell the Story!

1—Straight Undressed Hair. 2—The Ready-Set Slipped Over the Hair in 3 Seconds. 3—The Result—A Beautiful Toilet Everytime!

Miss Ray Morse, well known beauty specialist, says: "After seeing the wave any woman can so easily get by simply using the *Ready-Set Marceller*, I would be selfish if I did not admit that it will save American women thousands of dollars formerly spent with beauty parlors.

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well as I. You'd better go right away and fetch your daughter so I can have a look at her. Run along now, and bring the girl back with you."

With his point gained, an imp of perverseness took possession of him. He was angry that he had pleaded the cause of a certain unknown Winona West in vain, and had triumphed only when he had revealed the fact that Winona West was an Ormiston. That was what angered him. An Ormiston, indeed! Damn it, if Winona had only been given a fair show she could have won on her own feet without the necessity of propping her up with an Ormiston crutch.

He stood up abruptly, clad in all his old magnificence of manner.

"I am going, Mrs. Vanderloon," he said, "but not to fetch my daughter. On the contrary, I shall advise her most earnestly to refuse to enter your house. The atmosphere of snobbishness that pervades it is fairly nauseating."

He bowed, and with his chin well up in the air left her—for once speechless.

After he had gone Mrs. Vanderloon slipped down a little in her chair. Her head dropped forward. She called out: "Alice!" and once more "Alice!"

Her companion entered, running heavily. "What is it?" she asked in alarm.

"Call up that hotel—the Beldmore?—yes, the Beldmore, and get my son Peter on the telephone."

"Yes!" panted Alice.

"And tell him—and tell him—yes, tell him that Mrs. Vanderloon would be glad to have him and his wife come to tea."

"To tea!" exclaimed Alice. "Why, it's almost dinner-time!"

"Is it? Well, never mind. Tell him that Mrs. Vanderloon begs—begs, mind you, Alice—that he and his wife come to her house at once. Tell him at once, Alice, and don't come back without an answer."

With the aid of her cane, the old lady pried herself up straight in her chair once more.

Her lips moved a little and she muttered irascibly to herself. "That Dick Ormiston! Just as crazy as ever!" Then she waited impatiently, rapping her cane on the floor.

Alice came impetuously and breathlessly back.

"Well?" queried the old lady sharply. "Speak out, can't you? Did he answer? Tell me what he said."

"He said—he said that he and Mrs. Vanderloon would be over as fast as the traffic permits."

A slow smile widened the old lady's thin lips. A faint flush crept into her carefully massaged cheeks.

"Very good," she said. "And Alice," she added as an afterthought, "you might tell Bradford we shall be four for dinner."

The Old Woman Is Jealous—Continued from page 15

himself standing beside a trellised iron gate, and he was holding the young woman to his heart. Under those extraordinary circumstances for the soul that was Walter Benalick there was but one thing to say. And he said it.

"I swear it to God-a'-mighty. I love you. Look here! I'll speak to the major. He'll do anything for me. They think a lot of me in the battery. I'll see the D.A.C. Look here, Yvonne! I love you, tha's all. We'll get married, tha's what we'll do. Yvonne. Married by the padre. He's a grea' friend of mine. Married tomorrow."

"Why for you go?"

"Mus' get back to the battery, lil' Yvonne. It's late. You're beautiful, Yvonne. It's like a dream—a wonderful dream."

In her pale face her eyes burned brilliantly. "Stay and talk with me."

"I daren't," said the corporal, tearing himself away. "By God! I daren't. Look here! All this time I've had no one—d'you see—no one to care for. No one but the ole woman. And now—God love you, Yvonne." He kissed her, broke away, went reeling down the lane.

Automatically, he awoke the next morning at a quarter of seven. He was lying on his bunk in the dugout, fully dressed, and the chin-strap of his steel hat was round his neck, choking him. His head was splitting. An orchard—pears—a girl. What had he said? He'd kissed her, hadn't he? What was she like? Or had he been dreaming? In the face of his duties he dismissed the questions, swept them aside with a wave of his huge hand.

"Shake a leg there, my lads. There's a blooming war to attend to."

And he climbed up and out into the misty morn of another day. On the immediate left the Canadian howitzers were intermittently firing, and the crack of their nearest gun played havoc with the corporal's head. He went over to the gun-pit. The retiring sergeant had nothing to report.

The crew ate their breakfast in the gun-pit. It was the same old fare: skilly, sugarless and minus milk; a thick hunk of bread with a fat slab of bacon adorning it; a mug of coffee that might just as well have been called tea. The corporal sipped it dreamily.

Yvonne.

He rose, dumped his porridge into a half-filled sand-bag, bit a huge piece from his bread and bacon, laid the crescented remainder on the gun-wheel, and commenced to clean his mess-tin with a handful of dirt; for he wanted to heat some water in it, and shave.

Yvonne.

Out of the mist, materializing on the instant, incredibly swift and destructive, came a hiss, a panic. Another! Then, another! The lad from Manchester, sacrificing his coffee, threw himself behind the parapet. Three explosions followed. Idly, the corporal turned to see where the shells had landed. A cloud of brick-dust, five hundred yards away, evidenced the spot. Fritz, searching the howitzers, was away past the mark. The Canadians went on firing.

"WHAT in hell's name are you doing down there?" roared the corporal.

"Them's shells, ain't they?" piped the lad. "Pretty close."

"Ha!" The corporal gave his laugh. "They were fifty ruddy miles away. Wait till they begin dropping in the gun-pit." But his eyes and voice softened. "Well," he said, "you'll get used to 'em, my boy. No need to duck for them sort. You'll never hear the shell that gets you. Look—you've spilled your coffee, see. Here, take my mug. Tell the cook I want it filled again."

Late in the afternoon the corporal addressed himself to Major Travers. The commanding officer had every reason to grant his request, for the man before him was *the battery*. "Corporal," he said, "I'll let you in on a secret. This is W day. May God be with us and the Canadians at 5:30 a. m. on Z day."

"Saturday," said the corporal.

"That's it, Corporal. So you'd better postpone your nuptials until we see how things turn out."

"I was thinking of my pension, sir. I'd like to—to leave it to some one if—if——"

The major reminded him. "There isn't a German shell with your——"

"You're right, sir. I'd forgotten that."

So the corporal went back to his gun-pit, and he and Skelly, Haslam, and seven of their mates worked like Trojans to strengthen their position with sand-bags, hauled elephant iron to cover their cartridge shelter, and cut a narrow trench for their safety under fire.

"What ho! Corp," said the No. 7. "Who's been hammering a spike into your head?"

"Yes, that's a bad cut you've got there," said Gunner Skelly.

"It's dirt," said the corporal. "That's all it is. I need a bath."

That night, despite their protestations, he took the guard. He had a hazy notion he had promised to do so. And yet, for what reason? He couldn't see Yvonne until tomorrow, when for another twenty-four hours he was again off duty.

In the splinter-proof shelter thirty feet away where the gun crew were resting, all was silent. A slight breeze whispered in the wood. The corporal, satellite of his gun, stared with her into the gloom. Just ahead of them, across a stream, a tiny speck of light burned evenly. Its importance was inestimable: for it was the night light, and the crosslines in the diaphragm of the gun's dial sight cut it exactly. By that was she laid on her S.O.S. By that she spat accurately at night. To

whip off her muzzle and breech covers and pull the lanyard would be the work of a second, but only by that speck of light would her great shell roar to its precise objective in front of Canadian soldiers whose lives depended on it.

There was a faint shuffling behind him. The corporal turned his head, then, rigid with attention, flashed his torch. A boy, small of stature, in a field artillery uniform shorn of divisional mark or insignia, stood before him.

"What the devil are you—— Yvonne!" he gasped. "What are you doing here?"

"You ask me come," she said.

"I asked you——" The corporal's eyes were penetrating. "When? Last night?"

"Mais, oui." She smiled at him. "You 'ave forgot—so soon?"

"But—but how did you find your way here?"

"I know theese places a little. You tell me how I find you. You say you love me and want me to come."

"My God," said the corporal. "Wait!" He shut off the light from his torch. "Don't make a sound!" To steady her he grasped her arm, found her trembling. Then, overstepping his duty, he led her into the deeper gloom of the gun-pit.

"I asked you to come, did I?"

"Mais certainement. Is it that I should not be here?"

"That's just what it is."

"Then I go."

"Wait. Look here, Yvonne. It's dangerous coming through those woods at night. Don't you know the Germans are liable to fire any moment? Tell me—where'd you get that uniform?"

"Le commissariat—l'Anglais—in Arras. Last night I tell you about heem."

The corporal dimly remembered it. Her hand, imprisoned in his own, was fluttering a little. "Yvonne," he said, "I shouldn't have asked you to come here. You see I can't leave the gun. You'll have to go back alone."

"I am not afraid," she told him. "I come because I 'ave nobody to talk with me. I am so ver' lonely." Her head lay on his breast.

"Poor little kid. Look here. Today—today, you understand—I spoke to the major. He told me——" The corporal checked his words. "I've been thinking about you all day, Yvonne. I couldn't get you out of my mind. Do you really love me, Yvonne?"

"Ver' much."

"Well, when it's all over—we'll have a little home. Out in Canada. That's the place to go. Some of these Canadian chaps were telling me about it. We can get a farm and——" He simply couldn't continue. Holding her in his arms he was drunk with happiness.

"Oh," she said. "I forget. I bring you pears." And from the pockets of her tunic she produced four big pears, all of which the corporal managed to hold in one hand.

"God love you," he said hoarsely. He was silent for a while, then he said: "Where'd you learn English, Yvonne?"

"Le Baron—he teach me. I love him ver' much. He fight for France long, long time. Perhaps he is dead. But I pray for heem."

He wished to tell her of his own record, acquaint her of the battles he had fought, the deeds he'd seen and done—and yet to be modest so that she might love him all the more.

"This old gun," he said, "she's come right through it—since 1915. And me with her." He laughed. "We'll surprise old Fritz when we start. And that'll be soon. He'd give his eye-tooth to know where we are. You see we have a method of firing that plays the devil with him, and we get in a couple of days' firing before he finds us. That's our blooming trick, Yvonne. Yes, this old woman, here! Round this trail, these wheels, hundreds of men——" The corporal winced a little. "That's why it seems so strange—you—being here."

She clung to him.

"But one of these mornings—very early, when your head is on your pillow—you will hear us. Crack! crack! crack! Just like that. Then you turn on this little ear, and—crack! crack! crack! again. That's us," he said proudly. "That's me. This old woman here, and two more like her fifty and a hundred feet away up the stream. When we fire, we laugh and spit, little Yvonne, spit death to the enemy. We've been worth our weight in gold to France. And we've cost Germany ten thousand men, these guns have."

THE corporal held her tighter. "If anything ever happened to you now, Yvonne——" Again words failed him. "But you must go, little girl. This pit is no place for you. The old woman is ugly, a bloody murderess. By God, I seem to hate her when you are here."

She disengaged herself from his arms. "You come tomorrow?" she asked. "To my garden?"

"At eight o'clock," said the corporal. "What shall I bring you? Some eggs—bacon——"

"Merci. Just you—*mon fiancé."*

He went a few steps with her, his arm around her waist. *"Je vous aime,"* he said, his heart ringing. "Know what that means?"

She laughed and kissed him. *"Je vous adore,"* she whispered; then vanished into the valley of the night.

Alone, the corporal leaned on the great barrel of his gun, his head bowed forward, chin in his arms: a motionless, graven figure, whose eyes under the rim of the steel helmet were dancing in the dark. He became part of the dissolving night, of the cruel hours that chilled his legs, his fingers—but not his heart. That glowed inside him like a beacon.

The approach of dawn. An hour when the world seems smaller, when sounds and silences are ghostly. A murky sky, against which the cathedral's ragged towers lose their outline. German and Canadian Very lights—faded greens, reds, blues—drifting up like sparks from dying fires. The "rip-rip-rip" of a machine-gun, like some one riveting a long way off. Silence. A muffled "crump-crump" far to the south: Fritz dropping bombs. Silence. The diffused roar of a heavy shell, speeding through the graying sky, dragging the shades of night after it. Silence. Fritz begins shelling a road back of Arras: reverberating crashes that spread wave-like through the thickening dawn. The sudden "tong!" of a nearby howitzer: a

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metallic sound, dry, hollow, dying instantly. Road-shelling ceases. The uncanny silence. A low rumble to the north. Silence. Everything turning to gray: guns, tree stumps, trenches, grass. The awakening of birds: woods alive with dysphonic cheeps. The spinning hum of a biplane: British airman going to his morning beat, proceeding leisurely as if half asleep. Two more, behind him. Black puffs in the misty pink over the front line: the delayed sound of their explosions—like the clap of gloved hands. The vanishing grays. The imaginary feeling of warmth. In the east a great red sun. Early morning, and silence . . .

"Righto, Corporal," said the sergeant. "Ain't fired her, I see."

"No reason to yet," said the corporal.

He took his breakfast to his dugout, but before he could get through with it he was fast asleep.

At eight o'clock that night, the night of X day, the corporal, his pulse a little wayward, was perched upon a lichen wall. He had a parcel under his arm and in it was a large cooked ham, five pounds of sugar, half a dozen eggs, and four loaves of bread.

By the shade of the ole apple tree,
Where the birdies sang sweet songs to me.

At nine, he dropped down into the orchard and gave a series of long, low whistles. Half an hour later he approached the chateau, wandered slowly about its crumpled masonry. He could find no cellar, and it was too dark to investigate.

So the corporal gave it up, left his parcel under the pear tree, reclimbed the wall and made his way back to the battery, to his dugout, to a sleepless night and a dawn that merged into Y day.

"Shake a leg, my hearties. Don't forget there's a blooming war on."

And the sun came up in flaming splendor. It glared on friend and foe. It poured the flood of its contempt on ten thousand guns, in sunken roads, in dales, woods, and trenches, impartial alike to those facing east and those facing west.

Yvonne.

Twilight drifted into evening. With the coming of the stars a thrill ran through the battery. The officers told their sergeants, the sergeants told their men. Crews were to stand by their guns at five o'clock in the morning.

Yvonne.

"Get in your sleep, lads. I'll take the guard," said the corporal.

In the gun-pit he listened for a sound, a sound that meant more to him than the trumpet-call of peace. It was midnight when he heard it. He stiffened, then went to meet her.

"I am so ver' sad," was her greeting. "My uncle—he take me to Arras. I try so hard to come back. *C'est impossible.* I think I die if I do not see you."

He took her in his arms. "That's all right, little girl. I understand. Everything's all right now. I was afraid you'd——"

"What?"

"Oh, nothing." He laughed it off. The corporal had been thinking of a girl he'd known in Manchester. "I'm not much of a hand with the ladies, and so I thought perhaps——"

She was trembling a little. "The guns—the old woman—she not fire, eh?"

"Not until—" and he whispered in her ear, "half past five."

"So. *Cinq-heures-et-demi?* Tomorrow morning?"

The corporal looked at his watch. By its phosphorescent hands he read the hour. "This morning," he said.

She struggled a little in his grasp, seemed strangely restless. Then she said: "See? I bring you more pears."

"What, more of 'em. I'll get the collywobbles. Look here! Did you get my parcel?"

"Parcel?"

"A few things I managed to swipe from the mess. A ham, some eggs——"

"Oh! No. No, I do not find heem."

"Then he's still there under the pear tree," smiled the corporal. "You'll see heem when you go back."

She thanked him. "Now I must go," she said.

"There's hours yet. You'll be in your little bed long afore we fire." Once more he caught her to his breast. "God! I wonder if you know how much I——"

She kissed him dispassionately and broke away. "No, I must go. I see you tomorrow."

"Who can tell." The corporal's heart was riotous. "Let me hold you a moment longer, Yvonne. It may be—the last time."

"D E and F guns! Action!"

The voice, sharp as a sword, rent the silence of the night! It was astonishingly distinct, stark! An order that chilled the blood—echoed by a thousand artillery officers to north and south.

"God-a'-mighty!" said the corporal. "What's this!"

"You—tell—me—lie!" The girl's tone was sibilant.

"Quick, Yvonne! This way! Run for all you're worth!" He had pulled her past the cartridge-shelter into a narrow trench. "Along here fifty feet or so, then climb out and branch off through the wood! Run, Yvonne!"

She had gone. The crew, pouring into the gun-pit, went to their posts. The corporal yanked away the breech and muzzle covers.

"Wonder what it means?" said the No. 8.

"What's the fuze?" said the No. 7.

"She's dead on her night light," said the No. 1.

Again the night spoke: "All guns five degrees more right! Graze fuze!"

At once the men jacked the trail of their guns to the left, putting their backs into it and working feverishly.

"F gun, ready, sir."

"E gun, ready, sir."

"D gun, ready, sir."

A dread suspense; then: "Fire!"

"Crack! Crack! CRACK!"

The corporal laughed. "Whoops, my darling! And away she goes. Up to heaven and down to hell, with the best luck! Spit it out, old woman! Blow some ruddy sense into 'em!"

They had been first in action, were reloading before the guns to the right and left began thundering.

"Now then, my lads; look alive. The old woman's waiting for another cough-drop. Up with that shell!"

Thock! went the gun, her bore vibrating!

"Crack! Crack! CRACK!"

"Yow! that's the music. Now keep out of each other's way, can't you! Skelly!" he swore. "I'll send you back to Manchester if the old woman knocks you down again. Stand on your toes," he yelled, "facing her, you lousy little earwig! Hello, we're off the night light. Jump to it, lads. Trail left—trail left. Steady. All right. Let 'er go!"

"CRACK!"

Then, all at once, without vestige of warning, came a venomous hiss, instantaneously growing into a fearfully swelling roar, instantaneously assuming gigantic proportions.

CRASH!

Splitting earth and heaven, smashing out the very light of the world, it burst in between D and E guns, accurately in the position! Over came another, then another, then another. Under it the gun crews quailed like reeds. Crash, crash, crash, crash, crash! They came in scores and fifties—burst in wicked stabs of bluish-pinkish light.

It was a shambles! Their exact position was under the deluge of a brigade of German 5.9's!

"My God!" said the corporal, putting his hand over his eyes. "They've got us! Got us to an inch! How did they ever——"

And then, more sharply than all the explosions about him, the realization staggered him, smote at his heart:

Yvonne!

Before he could recover, a shell lit with indescribable idiocy of explosion right on the parapet of the gun-pit! Screams, cries, moans, smell of gas—a panic! Somebody was speaking to him. It was Gunner Skelly. He shoved the lad aside, roared a command.

"Get that shell up! Together—home!"

"F gun, out of action, sir!"

The corporal could hear no report from E gun, and he knew why: the boche had got both of them in the first minute!

"Pull that bloody lanyard," he shouted.

Some one did, and the gun's bark was barely heard in the midst of repeating crashes. Another shell burst right beside them! Another just in front!

"Skelly," said the corporal. "Go out there and fix that night light!"

"Yes, Corporal."

"Here, wait!" He shot a look at the lad. "To hell with it. We'll fire her as she stands."

"Yes, Corporal."

"Bring up another shell."

"Yes, Corporal."

"Come on, my lads," yelled the corporal. "Stick to it. Stick by the old woman."

"I will, Corporal," said the crew; and the crew was the lad from Manchester.

The shell was on its tray. Gunner Skelly depressed the gun to her loading position. He and his corporal lifted the tray on to the recoil slide, from which the shell could be pushed into the breech. The lad turned to find the rammer.

There was a blinding flash, the white-hot intensity of a fiendish explosion.

"Oh . . . mother . . . dear . . ."

Thrown aside violently, the corporal felt an impact through the flesh of his

arm. From where he lay he could see right into the cartridge-shelter. It was faintly illuminated by a storm lamp. And there, cowering at the far end, white of face, mesmeric of eye, was a soldier, a youth, a——

Yvonne! She had been caught, forced back, by the shell-fire.

He rose, went in there, faced her, stood looking at her. She was trying to say something, but the words merely formed themselves on her twisted lips.

The corporal took off his tunic, bared his arm. It was red with blood. Using both hands he tore his first aid field dressing from its place in the lining of his coat.

"Here," he said, "wrap this round my arm—where the blood's flowing."

Her fingers couldn't hold the bandage. She dropped it in the dirt. The corporal picked it up. His gray eyes bored right through her.

"Try again," he said.

The girl screamed as the shelter shook with the explosion of a shell not five feet away. "You tole me——" she was jabbering.

"Bind my arm."

Absently, she did as she was bid, her lower jaw trembling, her mouth loose, shapeless.

"Thanks——" said the corporal.

Then, behind him, out of the volley of explosion, through the confused roar of the Canadian howitzers and 4.7's—for only the eight-inchers were silent—Corporal Benalick heard a voice.

"Report from D gun!"

Staggering to the entrance of the shelter he threw every ounce of exultation left him into his reply.

"D gun still in action, sir!" he roared.

Splinters, stones, sand-bags, lashings, handspikes, arms, legs were in a merry dance of death, hurtling through the night in all directions. The Corporal danced with them. Working frantically he pushed the shell home, rammed it in as best he could, threw in the cartridge and closed the heavy breech. He sang, he yelled, he shouted. Then he ran back into the cartridge-shelter. Yvonne, her knees drawn up to her chin, lay shivering in a corner. "Oh! I loved you," he roared drunkenly. "I wanted to marry you! I saw a home, a garden, out in Canada—along with you. Oh! I'm corporal of D gun, and I——"

"W—what you mean?" she chattered.

For answer he took a small and trembling hand, grasped it in his enormous palm, and hauled what was behind it into the gun-pit.

"Come along with me—*fräulein.*"

"Let me go," she was screaming.

"Safe here—with me." He swung her over the trail and holding her with his left arm put the grip of the lanyard into her fingers and enclosed all in the maw of his right hand.

"Blow 'em to hell, fräulein. Blow your friends to hell. Pull it hard, little fräulein."

"O-o-o-O!" she moaned, struggling to escape.

"Don't be scared, little fräulein. There ain't none of your bloody shells with my number on it, and there ain't——"

"You—say—you—love—me——"

Savagely, he whipped the lanyard, her hand and arm with it, across his chest. "Spit it out, old woman. Up to heaven and down to——"

D gun, queen of her battery, responded. She was old. She had three and a half years of service back of her. Her bore had grown faulty. She spat for the last time, spat backward, over her shoulder. In doing so she proved her corporal right. His number wasn't written on a German shell. It was written on her own. Her great shell burst, prematurely, at her lips.

Perhaps the old woman was jealous. For she tore a young girl from the corporal's grasp and threw the mangled body clear out of the gun-pit. With the man she was more merciful. She draped him almost gently across her trail.

The Lay of the Last Mitchell

—Continued from page 31.

approving eyes the rosy-cheeked girls who trooped past him.

Passing a large hall where exhibitions and conventions of all sorts took place, he spent a long time examining the announcements of a series of elimination bouts for the middleweight boxing championship. He passed from picture to picture of square-jawed and level-eyed young men, their arms carefully folded to expand their biceps. He nodded and muttered to himself, the names of vanished gladiators he had seen or known coming from his lips together with the smoke from his pipe. Jack Dempsey. Not big Jack but the Nonpareil, he who was christened Dempsey. Bob Fitzsimmons, the homeliest object ever to clamber knock-kneed through the ropes and the most dangerous. Young Griffo who could stand on a bandana handkerchief and, hands clasped behind his back, duck any blow aimed at his head. Dal Hawkins . . .

His pipe was out and he replaced it in his pocket. Now if only he had some money he would enter this little tobacconist's and buy him a real Wheeling stogie. Not that he really wanted one; he preferred his pipe. But it seemed fitting, somehow, that one's birthday be celebrated by smoking a stogie. The Sisters would have given him one had they known. But Michael had never told them his birthday. There was nobody now living on earth who knew or cared; the thought brought to his fine old brow the first wrinkle of the day. But it soon disappeared in the excitement of seeing the town!

Strolling along without purpose he did not observe that the smart shops and hive-like offices had little by little given way to long blocks of apartment houses, and these in turn to isolated homes with scraps of front yards. Here and there was a vacant lot, fronted by bill-boards.

Presently the old man came to a very

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long and high wooden paling, and in time to a great open gate where lounged a man in overalls. He gave Michael only a cursory glance as the old gentleman hesitated before the entrance.

Here, the old fellow thought, was some sort of an amusement park. He could hear strains of music coming from the interior. There were a great number of buildings large and small scattered about the grounds, a thin trickle of oddly dressed people were hurrying in and out of the gateway. Since nobody seemed to be purchasing tickets Michael concluded that admission was free. Accordingly he entered. He had no money to spend on side-shows, pink lemonade, shell-games, or the like, but he could at least watch the crowd and listen to the music.

For a long time he wandered about among the queer-shaped structures, unable to decide their purposes. Even to his untrained eye there was a plentiful lack of architectural unity. Here stood a neat Queen Anne home, with a prim garden surrounding it. Apart, and standing at an angle to the Queen Anne structure, was what appeared to be a white marble palace with curious, narrow, horseshoe arches for windows and doorways. Thin spires rose from the roof, and a huge green dome surmounted all. As Michael gazed upon it a half dozen camels appeared, ridden by bronzed men wearing turbans and caftans. A part of the circus, he decided, but where was the big top—the tent?

Strange, monotonous, whining music drew his attention further to the left, and suddenly he found himself in a miniature Chinatown. There were rows of two-storied wooden houses decorated with funny little red and gold balconies, the walls plastered with vermilion paper notices printed in Chinese ideographs. At the entrance to a restaurant, a fat Chinaman lounged, smoking a long-stemmed bamboo and bronze pipe. Across the way, laundrymen toiled busily beyond their window-panes. Chinese children played about the street. At one end of the short thoroughfare a little group of white folk appeared; there was a very pretty young girl, an elderly man who looked like a retired missionary and carried a large book under one arm, a smirking, obsequious fellow who seemed to be a sort of guide.

At the instant this group appeared somebody began to yell excitedly, and a man rushed out from nowhere and pushed Michael down an alley. "Out of the picture, old-timer!" he yelled. "This ain't your set."

Michael did not understand, but moved obediently on. Instantly he was in open country; and discovered to his bewilderment that the rear of the houses that made up one side of the street in Chinatown were unfinished, and even without walls.

It was all too much for Michael. What kind of a circus this might be he could not guess. But customs had changed since his circus days, no doubt. Some of the men and women he met grinned amiably at him, or waved a hand. Others ignored him. Could he have known it, he looked entirely in keeping with the rest, in his rusty Prince Albert, ancient plug hat, his shillalah gripped in one knobby hand.

Old Michael had been walking now for more than three hours. Suddenly he became conscious that he was tired, and that it was time to eat. He looked about for a retired spot where he might lunch at ease. He found one in an old stage-coach which stood apart and deserted, its torn curtains fluttering lazily in the breeze. Into this he climbed, and seated himself comfortably.

From various pockets Michael produced bits that he had cunningly salvaged for the past two days, in readiness for this adventure. There was a pint bottle filled with, alas! plain water. Two cold boiled potatoes wrapped in a sheet of newspaper. A pill-box half full of salt and pepper, mixed. A slice of cake, very dry and hard. Three crackers, and a morsel of cheese. Spreading out a sheet of newspaper for table-cloth, he ate leisurely and with relish.

It was shortly after lunch that he found himself attracted by a considerable racket that came from behind a great barn-like edifice. Rounding this, he came to a small segment of rough wooden bleachers, on which sat a dozen or so onlookers. Their attention was held by a tense scene being enacted just below, in what was evidently a tiny hamlet. Glad to find a place to sit, he crossed over and eased himself, unchallenged, upon the topmost plank, from which point he could see all that was taking place beneath him.

A gleam came into his old blue eyes as he inventoried the dozen or more thatched cottages, the gutted old church with half its spire shot away, and the pub, or tavern below him. It was a little village, clustering about an open space dominated by a market cross, and if it wasn't Ireland then he had never seen shamrocks growing wild! It might even be County Kerry itself. And the people who were milling about—there was no mistaking them, either. But what were they doing?

Michael leaned over, squinting his eyes to see the clearer. And it was at once evident to him that all was not well with this poor little hamlet! In the entrance to the church an aged priest wrung his hands, raised his tear-dimmed eyes to the skies. From a cottage doorway an old crone, her gray hair flying loose in the wind, clenched her fists and screamed: *"The curse o' Crummel on ye!"* Ragged children flew screaming across the market-place, dodging in and out between the piles of vegetables, and fish stalls. From the cottages hurried boys and old men—there seemed to be no able-bodied males left in the village—brandishing futile weapons: a sickle, a hammer, the post wrenched from a bed, a broken chair. They gathered into a loosely formed squad, charged faint-heartedly across the market-place. And then it was that Michael made out what menaced them.

There suddenly debouched from behind the public house a brisk file of sturdy-looking chaps, clad in semi-armor. They wore metal head-gear, breastplates, sturdy boots to which were attached heavy spurs. Led by a petty officer, they charged with drawn swords upon the hapless villagers, who moved half-heartedly to meet them. A fracas resulted. The youths and old men resisted with futile rage. The women screamed out abuse or encouragement, or joined in the fray with feet and finger-nails.

Withal, there was lacking something. Some lusty thwacks were exchanged, plenty of sound curses rent the air, here and there a man toppled over realistically. But it wasn't a good fight, as none knew better than the pop-eyed Michael himself.

And suddenly Michael's thoughts were echoed by a young man who seemed very much worked up. He was bareheaded, coatless, and wore riding-boots. Lifting his arms, he yelled, *"Stop!"* Then, leaping upon the pedestal of the market cross, he began to harangue the gathering. Both sides, Michael noted with surprise, instantly gave over scrapping to pay respectful attention to him.

"Listen, dumb-bells! Try to remember what this is all about. It ain't a tea being served at the rectory, and it ain't a game of bean bags! This is *war! Rapine!* Here come Cromwell's Ironsides to avenge the death of one of their stragglers. They descend on this poor, helpless little Irish hamlet, populated only by half-starved women, old men, and children. All their grown men have gone off to the war, or been killed in defence of their idomitable country! They haven't got a chance, see? But they can at least show that the Irish die rather than surrender! At the door of his church their aged priest blesses them as they leap into the fray, asking only for death with honor! And you met Cromwell's men like you were a reception committee greeting a rival tennis team come to compete for the village championship! I'll retake this all afternoon if I have to, till I get some real action! Now, once more! *Get into it!* Remember your wrecked church. Your poor old father, weltering in his brains—if any. Your mother, slain as she tries to hide her crippled child under her skirt! *Let's go!"*

If the young director's words did not inspire the actors, they inspired Michael O'Shaughnessy Mitchell. For one thing he knew now what it was all about. He didn't know quite how it had happened—but here was old Cromwell once again laying waste his beloved country. And its natives were not rising to the occasion at all, at all! Had any one noted him, which nobody did, they would have seen his mouth close like that of a snapping turtle's, as he removed his cuddy pipe and knocked the dottle out on the wooden bench. The sound of that tapping was like the knocking at the gate in Macbeth. There was something fateful, foreboding, about it.

The pipe pocketed, Michael slowly removed his coat, folding it neatly and laying it beside him. Last of all he took off his ancient plug hat. Then, poised like a diver about to leave the springboard, he stood erect, casting a vengeful and defiant glare upon the scene once again being enacted beneath him.

The cameras were grinding; the soldiers were deploying from behind the tavern. Again, from the dark mouths of the wreched hovels emerged the faint-hearted and hopeless defenders of their little fields. The priest uplifted his streaming eyes; the old woman screamed; children fled. Then, again, the opposing forces

were locked in fight. Not as that term was understood by the last of the Mitchells!

There came from the top plank of the bleachers a thin, eerie screech that somehow, amid all the babel of sounds, sent through the hearers a thrill of nameless fear. There sailed, far out over the heads of the other lookers-on, a dark object that was Michael's plug hat. It hovered like a portent for an instant above the milling throng in the mimic market-place, and was swallowed up amid the threshing forms. Then the thin, wiry figure of the old man in a series of leaps downward from tier to tier, gaining impetus with each, was projected into the thick of the fight. And as he landed, his voice rose once again. *"Erin go bragh!"* Then he was too busy to waste breath on words.

The young director was as surprised as any one, but he was alert to take advantage of the unexpected. This was one of the things that made him a truly great director. After one startled glance at Michael, he looked over his shoulder and bawled, "Camera!" Three cameras from different angles, began recording the real battle that now waged.

Two soldiers rushed upon Michael, trying to disarm him. But this was no simple task. Dancing about on his toes as lightly as any ballerina, the old man raised high above his white head his stout shillalah. He grasped it in the middle, in the manner of the ancient art of the singlestick, whirling it about like a drum major's baton, shooting it out at unexpected angles, constantly in motion and as elusive as a spot-light. A ringing blow shied off the tin casque of one soldier; another dented a breastplate; a backhanded wallop laid low the dignified lieutenant in command. Noses, knuckles, heads suffered. The character of the struggle changed. No longer was it marked by anything like listlessness. From their cottages old women ran screaming to lend their aid. The peasant youths took courage and wrestled with their maturer foes. The very children snarled about their legs like little tiger cubs.

Over the yells and curses of the combatants rose the voice of the director as he danced about. He exhorted the wavering Ironsides in vitriolic outbursts.

"You're he-men, soldiers, come to avenge a murdered comrade in arms! Don't let these lousy villagers put it over you! *Get* them! *Oliver himself is looking on at you!*"

Scourged on less by the director's cries than by the elementary instinct of self-defence, the battered soldiers bore down on old Michael in a concerted rush. There ensued a final flailing of the blackthorne stick, a fresh crop of black eyes and sore heads, and Michael went down in a turmoil of arms and legs and panting bodies. The victory was won!

"Cut!" shouted the young director, rushing forward to pry the mass apart. Man after man was hauled aside, or staggered weakly to his feet. Finally at the very bottom of the heap, breathless but with the light of battle still gleaming in his frosty blue eyes, his gnarled hands still clutching his shillalah, Michael O'Shaughnessy Mitchell was lifted erect. He found himself staring into the eyes of the satisfied but mystified gentleman in the riding togs.

"I don't know who you are, nor why you crashed into this, old-timer," he was saying. "But you sure saved the picture! Just wait till this is run off in the projection room. If we haven't got a *wow*, it'll be because my camera men got so steamed up they forgot to crank!"

Michael blinked, shook his head. His nose was skinned, there was a mouse under one eye, all the buttons on his vest were missing and one sleeve of his shirt had been torn off. Otherwise, as his wind returned, he seemed all right. He opened his mouth in speech.

"Is it all over? And who won?" he asked.

The director laughed. "You won! And who *are* you?"

But the old man seemed not to hear him. His eyes roved about the mock village in vague wonderment. A strange peace had descended upon it. Rancor had amazingly died. At one side a Cromwellian with a lump on the side of his head was chatting amiably with one of the frenzied old women. Stranger yet, at the porch of the church another soldier was holding a match to the cigaret which the village priest had just taken from a gold case. Michael could make nothing of it.

"Who won?" he repeated.

The director laughed, comprehension coming to him.

"Why this wasn't a real fight, old top! We're making a picture, see? A scene for the superfilm 'Cromwell.' It was all done in play."

Michael blinked again, rubbed his tender nose. A slow smile illuminated his wrinkled face. "Is it so?" he muttered. "Sure, and 'twas a foine game to play! And whin will ye be playin' it again, by yer leave? I like it well."

Then his eyes fell upon what had but a short time before been his most treasured possession; the old plug hat. Beaten flat it was, trampled full of dirt, a wreck beyond all retrieving. The sight drove from his mind all lesser matters as he stooped, picked it up, and regarded it with tears in his eyes.

"I've had it thirty-odd year," he whispered.

The director clapped him on the shoulder. "You follow me and I'll see that you get a better one! You need tidying up, too. Buttons sewed on, and so forth."

They crossed an open space, and passed through a long building. At a certain door they halted, and the director knocked. To the middle-aged, competent-looking woman who opened, he ordered: "Fix this old gentleman up will you, Milly? And above all fit him out to a new topper. I'll be waiting for him out here. Hurry, now, please!"

With a swift dexterity that held Michael silent, the mistress of the robes and her assistant restored the old man to presentability. Swiftly a new set of buttons were sewn to his vest. The sleeve was sewn on again. He was brushed, his face tenderly washed and a lotion applied. To his nose a bit of court-plaster was gummed. His thin hair was neatly brushed. Finally, from a vast collection, he was fitted to a shiny top hat with a flat brim and rakish bell; a hat that had

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last been worn by a bogus French nobleman, and which, cocked a little to one side on Michael's brow, changed him so that he hardly knew himself in the glass.

Outside in the corridor he found the young director, in converse with an older man.

"This is the lad that saved the day, Kranitz," the younger man said. "Shake hands with—what was the name? Mitchell? A good fighting name, that!"

Kranitz looked old Michael up and down while he chewed on an unlighted cigar. Then, impulsively he took from a breast pocket another fat cigar, wrapped in silver foil, and presented it to Michael.

"Smoke on me, my friend! They're made special for me in Havana. Cost me fifty-five cents apiece, net."

The director laughed as Michael accepted the gift.

"You don't get out of it that easy, Kranitz! I'm gonna take this old he-man right to the treasurer and get him twenty-five real bucks."

The other man sighed. "All right, Bill! You seen him do his stuff. I ain't."

Michael shook hands with Kranitz, and was borne away again by the director. He paused before a wicket, and presently received five brand-new, crackly, five dollar bills which he folded into his inside coat pocket. There were other corridors, doors opening and closing, and they were in a large room filled with little tables at which a hundred or more men and women were eating.

The director piloted him to a table where sat a bored young man who doubled in dangerous stunts for a famous star. To him the director spoke as he pulled out a chair for his guest.

"Marlatt, meet Mr. Michael Mitchell, my newest find. He has just made the biggest shot ever, for 'Cromwell.' Too bad you wasn't there. Give you some new ideas about real dare deviltry."

Michael found himself being served with hot coffee and a thick club sandwich and luscious pie.

Suddenly the director rose. "Got to be on the job," he announced. "Want to see some more work—that is, if you promise to keep out of the picture till I ask your help?"

Michael shook his head. An uneasy recollection had come to him. Back at the institution the Little Sisters would be all a-flutter. His absence from the midday meal would be a real sensation in that quiet home.

"Thanking ye kindly, I'll be going home," he said.

"Where do you live, by the way? You haven't told me, and I want to send you tickets for 'Cromwell' when it is released."

Michael sighed. "I live with the Little Sisters," he admitted.

The director looked puzzled. "With who?"

Marlatt spoke up. "Why, that's the home, isn't it? The place where the old gentlemen in—er—reduced circumstances, retire. Am I right?" He turned to Michael.

"Ye are that. 'Tis a poorhouse I belong at."

"But that is a long way from here!" the director said. "Several miles, I should think. Charlie!" he called across the room to a page. "Get a taxi right away. Have it at the gate in five minutes. And tell the driver to charge up the fare to us."

He turned to Marlatt. "Bob, you put him aboard. I'm late, as it is. Goodbye, you old man-eater! Give us a look-in any time you are up this way." He took out a card, scribbled a line on it, and handed it over. "This'll admit you at the gate. Not that you need it; I don't know anybody around here capable of keeping you out if you choose to come in! But this card will save argument. And I'll send over a flock of admissions for 'Cromwell' soon as it's released. Enough for all the old vets, and Little Sisters, and everybody!"

Michael found himself in a luxuriously upholstered taxicab, in which strange vehicle he retraced his forenoon's ramble in no time at all, and drew up at the entrance to the home for aged men. He clambered out a little stiffly, opened the gate, and squared his shoulders. The fight back there in the make-believe village, that was pleasure. But the reproaches of the Little Sisters, they weighed on his soul! One of them met him half-way up the walk.

"Michael Mitchell, where *have* you been? You've had us all worried to death."

It took Michael a long time to explain to her and to her other Sisters, just what marvelous adventure had befallen him this day.

Half an hour later, his new topper set on a table nearby where he could behold it, his shoes off and his feet thrust into comfortable slippers, Michael sat before an open fire, meditating. He was at peace with the world. It had been a gorgeous day; an unbelievable birthday, the very finest he had ever had.

He took from his pocket the cigar Kranitz had given him. Carefully he unwrapped from it the silver foil, smelled its sleek, oily fragrance, and then rewrapped it. Then he got out his old black cuddy pipe, packed and lighted it. He closed his eyes as the blue-gray clouds enfolded him. He felt a little tired; and from time to time a corn twinged. His poor old feet had been hardly used, during that battle scene!

He seemed to be asleep; but he was not. Every little while, one eye would open and roam cautiously about to see if anyone were observing him. Then a hand would touch his right breast. It was there, beneath his rusty frock coat, that a pleasant, dry crackling assured him that five brand-new five dollar bills reposed, wealth unheard of, the key to follies unimaginable! For, among other things, Michael O'Shaughnessy Mitchell was now a capitalist.

May a Dead Love Be Coaxed Into Life?

By Mrs. M.—Continued from page 74

have found that truth out for yourself.

What, then, can you do? You can think in terms of life, rather than of love. You can try to put yourself and your emotional frustration out of the picture, and consider what is best for your children. Have not you, as well as your husband, been rather forgetting them? Cannot you both consult their interests, instead of concerning yourselves so exclusively with your personal relationship?

It goes without saying that two parents are better than one for children, especially for those who, like yours, are approaching adolescence. As I understand it, from reading your letter, you, your mother and your clergyman have all appealed to your husband to come back to *you*. He refuses even to argue the point. Suppose you stop arguing it, and concentrate on another. Suppose you ask him to *come back to the children*.

As a first step, write George a note, asking him to see you in order to discuss an important matter. Make it clear that you have a new plan for him to consider. He will want to hear what you have to say, if only out of curiosity.

When you do see him, call on all your reserves of dignity and self-control. Don't make a scene. Don't weep. Don't reproach him for not loving you, and ask him what you have done to be treated so. All of this behavior is perfectly natural, logically justifiable—and worse than futile, since it irritates an obstinate and indifferent man and hardens his resistance.

Shall I tell you what a woman I know said to the husband who had left her and their two boys in the same fashion that George has left you?

"Somehow, we've made a mess of things," my friend began. "I've tried to be the sort of wife you wanted, but evidently I haven't succeeded. You are sure that you don't love me any longer. Then there's no use arguing about that, or boring you with a discussion of my feelings. We have failed, and we have to pay for failure. But have we any right to make the children pay?

"You helped to bring them here without their asking. They need you. I'm not urging you to come back to me as my husband, if you don't care for me. But you haven't stopped caring for them. Then can't you come back to us as their father? Can't you live in the house with us all, can't you and I, without recriminations, work together, at bringing up these youngsters? Because we're failures as husband and wife, do we have to be failures as parents?"

It is in somewhat this fashion that I advise you to talk to George. Above all things, make it clear that you are not insisting upon your own "rights" as a wife. Your pride of sex should help you here; what real woman is willing to plead for love for herself in the name of "duty"?

And what if he refuses even a trial of co-operation for parental ends? Then, with the children's welfare still your first thought, you had better go away with them yourself and make a new home elsewhere.

This plan is advisable for several reasons. It is not fair to allow youngsters to grow up in a town which is a whispering gallery about them and their parents. It is at least possible that their complete removal from their father's sphere of interest may startle him into a realization that he cannot give them up. If, finally, you are to continue as their one actively functioning parent, you ought to find a manner of life which will afford you some measure of serenity and self-development. You cannot give your children what you ought to give them, as long as you are humiliated and wrought up by your present impossible situation.

In new surroundings you will not be reminded continually of the past. It is your husband's duty to support the children, wherever you live, but, for your own sake, develop in every possible way the individual capabilities which you mention in your letter. You will gain more than money. Interesting work is the finest aid to forgetting unhappiness. You seem to be an unusually competent woman, and the more things you can do successfully, the more chance you have of creating a life which will interest you and rounding out a personality which will stimulate your children.

The question of divorcing your husband need not arise immediately, although I advise you to choose for your new home a state in which your lawyer tells you that you can get a divorce. Unless you have religious prejudices against it, you may find it the logical seal of that divorce of the spirit which your husband seems to have set up.

I say "seems." For, after all, love that appears dead may be merely suffering from suspended animation. If your husband returns to you for the children's sake, or even if he refuses and you go away, suddenly it may come to him that you are the woman he loved—*and loves.*

MRS. M.

By Mr. H.—Continued from page 75

have had some share in the making of such an admirable home, and he must have a pride in you when he realizes that you are able to carry on the whole household handsomely on the fifty dollars a week that he gives you, and yet manage to be well dressed and attractive looking; and to earn money yourself besides. No, your husband is too much of a man, and he has too much at stake at home, to leave it all for a personal weakness or whim.

This brings me inevitably to the only remaining explanation: your husband is really in love with the nurse.

Even if he no longer cared for you as he did during the first years of your married life, he would still continue to live with you and his family for the sake of appearances unless he was so genuinely in love with another woman that living apart from her was unendurable.

Hard as it is for you, this is not an unnatural state of affairs. Unfortunately—how unfortunately only lawyers and divorce-court judges and psychologists know—marriage does not establish immutable laws with regard to the love of one's heart. It is an old and proven proposition that proximity is the strongest factor in causing two people to fall in love with each other.

And this is truer of a doctor and a nurse than of a man and woman thrown together in any of the other professions. Both of them are occupied with something that leads to intimacy of spirit in a peculiar way. They face together the inescapable realities of sickness and sorrow and death, and after that the conventions of life have very little force.

These are terrible words for you, his wife, to hear. Until you find a way out of your present darkness of mind you are certain to go on being desperately unhappy.

A woman is entitled to battle for her happiness and to make every attempt to hold her husband. You have an absolute right to demand that he shall be honest and straightforward with you, and tell you the whole truth. Then if the nurse is not too deeply in love with your husband, and knows that you are fully aware of what is going on, she may prefer to leave the community and get a position in some other place rather than face the consequences.

But before you do anything you must try to make up your mind what your action will be in case your husband is, as one must suspect, strongly in love with the nurse. You can divorce him, and start life over again without him. Or, since he does not seem to want a divorce, you may remain his wife merely in name, and keep your peace, and wait.

I know of a case very much in point. The husband was a writer. He and his wife lived in an exclusive Long Island community. They had no children. This man fell in love with a girl much younger than himself, and for eight years it went on. He was seen constantly with the girl. Everybody knew about it. Only the wife made believe it was not a reality. She closed her eyes and ears to every evidence of her husband's infidelity and interested herself in the Red Cross and other important activities until she became quite prominent. In the end the girl married another man, and the husband returned.

A woman must be compassionate, if only for her own good. Find out if your husband is truly and irrevocably in love with this nurse. Talk with the girl.

It will take all of your courage to adopt this direct course. But it is by far the better way. Slow poison fills the heart of a woman in your position, and the crushed and bitter feeling of not being wanted undermines your confidence and self-respect.

If you find out that there is only one way for your husband to be happy, give his happiness to him. It will hurt you less to lose him than to keep him against his will.

MR. H.

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The Gas Man—Continued from page 45

must be somepn wrong with the vetebrates of 'is spinal backbone.'

"Then I poured the Book o' Knowledge right iana his ear. 'Lister,' I says, 'no man marries my daughter unless he kin support 'er. If yer looking fer woik I'll startya in my Service Station, pumping air inta balloon tires. Five dollars a week to begin with, and I'll raise ya to seven in ten years, if ya do good.'

" 'No, thankya,' says Lister, curling his upper lips tillya couldn't see his musstash. 'I would only accept a position where I can meet me social equals.' 'Digging fish-worms maybe ya mean,' says I. 'Now, Lister, I give ya some advice. Ifya gonna make good in this woild ya gotta woik. Lookit me. I started in with a shoestring.' " Hen Dall stood at his full height, magnificent in spite of the smudge across his nose and the grease which seemed to ooze from his pores through his overalls.

Quite unexpectedly the great lady's features began to soften into a motherly, understanding smile.

"What did your daughter do?" she asked breathlessly.

"I didn't give 'er a chance to do nothing. Lister hollers that he didn't like my tone o' voice, so I grabs him. Gee, if it had a-been murder they could of identified me good by the finger-prints I left on his lily-white shirt. I'd a-threw him out but jess then Jap, from the head of the stairs, yells, 'Come to bed, Hen.' Course I hadda go. If I was a-falling outa a airship and Jap yelled, 'Come to bed,' I'd turn around and do what she said. It don't pay to argue with Jap.

"Anyhow, grandma, I want yer avice. Should I chain Strawberry by the leg to a radiator; or should I turn 'er loose; or should I move the family way out West to New Joisey and change our name so's the lizard can't find us? I ask you."

"Those are all good ways. And none of them will work," said the great lady with a sigh both bitter and sympathetic. Very carefully she doled the exact change into Hen Dall's car-stained palm and added sadly, "I ought to know. I've raised eleven children. All daughters. Drive on, Jackson."

Hen Dall struck a match on his No Smoking sign, drew a deep whiff, and stood there pondering.

The big limousine, with the mother of eleven daughters aboard, lurched its obese way back to the main road.

The Other Unwritten Law—Continued from page 43

as he had really needed more liquor.

"At any rate, Nicky," he contrived to say almost gaily, "you are being very entertaining, indeed!"

Nicky couldn't bluff him into admitting anything. He had been too careful to be tripped—even though he had done what he had without premeditation. He had done them, and yet it was more as if they had happened to him.

He remembered dropping the iron shovel by the body on the ground and hurrying to Betty. He had felt the need to do or say something that would erase that look of horror from her face. He wanted to tell her that it wasn't so bad as she thought; that he hadn't intended it; that it had simply happened. He remembered thinking as he crossed the drive and mounted the five stone steps, that in a way it was lucky that this thing *had* happened. It would bring him and Betty together again. She would stick by him, agree to say that Garcia had insulted her, or something; and the jury would acquit him on the ground of the unwritten law. Betty would come back to him—with Garcia out of the way. She would see that at last he had played the man.

The wind molded the jade-green dress tight against her slender figure, a wisp of hair fluttered across her staring eyes.

"You have killed him!" she gasped, pressing a knuckle to her trembling lip. "You have killed him!" she screamed. "Betty, Betty, listen! I didn't mean—— It just happened. Betty!" He moved to take her in his arms, to still her pain and terror. But she backed away with hands lifted as if from something dreadful and unclean. "Betty," he cried, "my dear, my love!" But she had turned to run along the hall, and before he could reach her was taking the receiver from the telephone. "Police!" she screamed, but only once. He felt her lips against his enclosing palm. "Murderer!" they tried to cry. He knew now that he was fighting for his life.

They struggled, tripped and fell, bringing with them the dining-room portière, which muffled their fall. And it was then that he shifted his hands to her throat, shook her in a frenzy in which fear changed to a sort of triumphant rage. Here was the white smooth thing that had tortured him for three long years, and now that her paramour was dead would turn him over to be hanged. He shook her in recollection of that first flaming agony when he had turned to her in the night, placed his mouth on hers, and she had murmured: "Lucien! Lucien, my darling!" He shook her again, and again, and when she ceased to struggle he kept his thumb on her throat till he could find the telephone receiver and replace it on its hook. Then he released her, and stood up—and realized he hadn't intended to do this at all.

He did not even try to revive her afterwards. He knew with the icy calm of finality what had occurred. He took the rounded limp body up in his arms, out into the night and the wind, and staggered with it through the darkness toward the water.

HE COULD say she had fallen in. He recalled that she and Garcia had spoken of taking the launch after dinner and running over to Warren's Spit. Later a stiff gale had risen, so they had not gone. But they might well have gone, and been capsized. Then an idea came to him with the sudden clarity of inspiration.

He shuffled sidewise with his burden over the narrow platform that led from the bulkhead to the dim square of the boat-house. It was quiet inside, and filled with the brackish smell of seaweed. The launch tossed about in the constricted space, rubbing its fenders against the platform with uncomfortable groans. But by feeling with his feet in the darkness, he managed to swing his burden down to the cockpit.

He was cold, though the night was sultry, when he shuffled back to the land. His arm muscles were twitching from the unaccustomed strain. The wind hurried him along as if to help him with his plan. Back in the library he took a couple of hurried drinks to bolster him for his task. Then he went out to the front lawn.

But when he tried, he found himself unable to lift and carry the heavy figure of Lucien Garcia. He took the body under the armpits and moving backwards dragged it toward the water. The wind now was against him. Every muscle ached, his breathing was as painful as if the lining of his lungs were scraped. But foot by foot, inch by inch, he worried the limp burden to the edge of the wharf. There he rested a few minutes before, with a final effort, he dragged its clattering heels across the boards of the platform and rolled it at last into the launch.

In a sudden panic of haste he felt for the greasy fly-wheel of the outboard motor; spun it till the engine sputtered and started; opened the doors of the boat-house, and untied the rope at the bow. The stern rope he twisted round a pile and held it taut against the pull of the motor, so as to head the boat straight out. As the bobbing launch slid out into the storm the waves at first struck the side of the bow and canopied the cockpit with spray, threatening to swerve the boat and send it ashore on his own grounds. But by hauling in on the rope and paying it out again at a favorable moment, he was able to keep the little craft with its grim burden bow on for the open. At last he released the rope, and the bigger waves in the sheltered inlet, being reflexes of the wash from the bay, struck the launch almost at right angles to the wind. The launch was swept now to the right, and now to the left, but moved steadily forward into the great abyss of the night.

A faint glow began to silver the choppy whitecaps, as if to light the pilgrims on. Jealousy burned in Talbot Wright's breast for a moment, then was lost in a sense of relief. The little launch, pushing its way into the waste of waters, was carrying from him forever both hate and love. In a moment it would be out of sight behind the Morrisette spit of woods. The waves would fling the overturned boat on the rocky beach. That

would explain away the bruises on Garcia's head.

A bigger wave! He saw a snatch of white. Perhaps a cap of foam, but it had seemed to him like the flutter of a jade dress in farewell.

He had returned to the house, bathed, and changed his clothes, and then had come downstairs and telephoned Nicky Morrisette.

"Nicky," he had asked, "can you see a light on Warren's Spit, from your window? Garcia and Betty started over there at dusk before this gale blew up." And when Nicky had returned and had answered that he could see nothing, "Thank you, Nick. Probably they saw the storm coming and ran in at one of the inlet bungalows for the night—MacQuade's, or some one who has no 'phone. Night-night."

The bodies had been found on Nicky Morrisette's beach in the morning. The newspapers had carried the story of the sudden gale which had cost two lives. Talbot Wright had spared himself the strain of viewing the bodies and had made a sufficient show of grief at Betty's funeral. Lucien Garcia's body had been shipped to friends in New York for burial. Wright had felt relief when he heard of it. He preferred Garcia, even dead, at a distance . . .

These vivid pictures out of the past had taken but a moment to cross the stage of his mind. Talbot Wright glanced at Nicky Morrisette with a feeling of relief, almost of exultation. The liquor had hit him a bit; not too much; just right. He was a little confused. Did his sense of happiness come from realizin anew that he was free forever from his jealous love of Betty, his fear of her famous lover. He turned to the waiting Morrisette with a spasm of sudden laughter.

"I am free, Nicky! I mean, well, every one knows what the situation was . . . You can't hang this on me, you fool! Come, have a drink. They're dead, and we are sorry, of course. But we are alive. Come, man, drop this silly bluff. Come, now, be a human being. You were fond of Betty. I loved her. Come on . . ."

He had moved around the table, caught his guest by the arm; but Morrisette shoved him away with such force that he sat heavily upon the sofa.

"Here," said Morrisette, bringing his hand from an inner pocket. "Read this, if you are sober enough to read."

Wright was offended, but he accepted the envelop, which was addressed to Morrisette, and drew from it a double sheet of folded note-paper. He noticed that the envelop bore a New York post mark, and that the paper was that of the Lamb's Club. The note was dated three days before.

Dear Nick:

I was booked to sail for London, where I had been informed I should be commanded to sing at Buckingham Palace. But I remember my promise, and you must remember yours. I have kept under cover; no one, not even my dearest friends know, and I fear they will never forgive me. This paper is some that I had stolen!

Now, Nicky, I shall come when you call me. My words will convict him. You shall win your case, and we shall be revenged. But, remember, I have your oath. If he does not confess you have promised that before he is taken I shall see him alone. I want but this little thing. It would be best in his house. Just him and me, for half an hour, alone. Keep faith with me, Nick!

Thy,
GARCIA.

Talbot Wright felt as if something had struck him a blow above the stomach, constricting his heart. He stared up at Morrisette whose black eyes were glinting upon him between narrowed lids.

"Why——" said Talbot Wright, and found that his voice was a whisper, "why—that's his signature, Nicky. But Garcia is dead!"

"DEAD!" cried Nicky harshly. "How do you know that he is dead?"

"Why, Nicky, they said—— And the papers said——"

"The paper said!" repeated Nicky with a cruel laugh. "Of course the papers said! When a girl like Betty is washed up on your beach with finger marks on her throat! I didn't believe him, Wright, at first. I thought he was hysterical or insane. But Doctor Galt performed a private autopsy for me and it showed no water in Betty's lungs. So I kept Garcia hidden till the thing was worked out and he had got well and strong. There is his letter and my promise, Wright. Are you going to fight me, or are you going to come through clean?"

Well and strong! A log in the fire broke with a startling rumble and a shower of sparks. The flame seemed unreal, but there was something there that reminded him . . . It was the logs. Soft and punky inside: burnt out, like himself. But he wouldn't give up. He could claim that Garcia was lying to save his own skin.

"No, Nicky," he responded hoarsely but firmly, and moistened his lips. "No. I didn't do it. I couldn't have done it. I loved her."

"Very well," said Morrisette, "I have given you your chance."

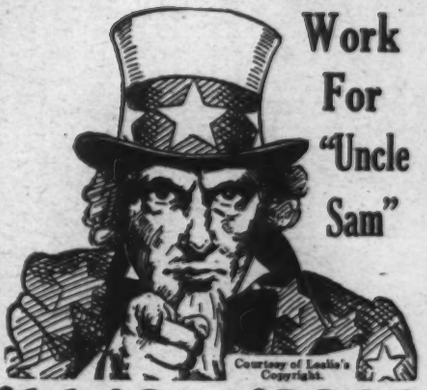
He turned and pushed aside the curtain at the long window; stood near the glass as if to shield it from the light in the room. He lit a match and held it steady before his breast for a moment, then moved it four times up and down. He came back then, clicked his polished heels together and bowed mockingly.

"I shall tell you good-bye now, until the trial," he said. "It will be useless for you to try to leave the house. There are men outside with instructions to see that you and your friend are not interrupted."

"Wait! Not Garcia, Nicky!" The liquor had died within him. He felt the old sickening surge of fear. He tried to get up, but his knees were weak. "My God, not Garcia, Nicky, old man. Why he might try to kill me!"

"Oh, no!" Morrisette smiled. "Not if what you tell me is true."

"Wait, Nicky." He couldn't see Garcia now. He was old, burnt out. And that man—— "Wait! Please!" He held out a hand. The wind had subsided. In the silence he heard a voice rise suddenly upon the night in song.



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Talbot Wright would have known it among a thousand. He had heard it at the opera in New York. He had heard it in his own parlor. But now it was wilder; alive as with a savage sorrow, yet sounding somehow triumphant.

Wright felt himself held as by a charm. The singer was approaching. Walking. Wright could detect the faint but regular pulse in the voice with each jolting stride. A cold prickle lifted the roots of his scalp.

"Nicky," he cried, "you must stop him!"

"I must keep my promise," said Morrisette. "You have had your chance."

TALBOT WRIGHT swallowed. His throat made a clicking sound. Seven years, Nicky had said. Seven years of safety. He would be only fifty when he came out; he would still have much of his life before him. Whereas now he was burnt out . . . The singing had ceased. A footstep was coming up the drive.

"Stop him, Nicky! Stop him—I'll tell!"

"Tell what?" demanded Morrisette without moving.

"I—did it, Nicky. I'll admit it. I didn't intend to. Don't let him come in, Nicky."

"Why did you do it?" asked Morrisette sharply.

"She had seen me hit him—with the shovel. She was going to call the police. I just wanted to stop her. My God, I loved her, Nicky! I didn't intend to do it."

"Well," said Morrisette, "you write it down here, on the back of this letter. Here is a book to rest it on, and here is a pen. Write: I killed my wife because she had seen me strike Garcia with a shovel, and she was trying to call the police."

Morrisette's lean hand was trembling as he adjusted the book on Talbot Wright's knee. But Wright managed the scrawl; had just added his signature when the front door bell rang shrilly.

"I'll stop him," said Morrisette. He took the paper and the pen and ran lightly from the room.

Talbot Wright urged his trembling knees to support him, leaned on the back of the sofa and moved to the table. The decanter chattered against the glass. He spilled a part of the liquor over his chin and down the front of his shirt when he drank, but it helped him at once.

He heard a sound behind him and whirled apprehensively. But it was only Morrisette, his cape over his shoulders, his hat and gloves in his hand. He came quite near, leaned forward swayingly on his cane, a singular smile on his face.

"There is another unwritten law, Wright," he said. "It is that you can't get away with murder; or, as some people put it—murder will out."

Talbot Wright could think of nothing to say except: "Seven years, Nicky," he reminded. "You'll keep your word?"

"Yes, Wright. I'll ask for clemency in the charge we mentioned. But not on the other charge. Listen carefully, Wright, because this is the last conversation we shall ever have unless you go on the stand at the trial. That letter from Garcia was a forgery. I copied his signature from a letter I once had from him asking me to arrange a ducking trip for a friend."

"The signature was a forgery?" Talbot Wright repeated. He felt dull and worn, and Nicky's attitude confused him. "Well, that's all right. To tell you the truth I'm glad I got the thing off my chest. And seven years isn't so terribly long."

"If you'd leave that booze alone you'd know what is happening to you," cried Morrisette with sudden heat. "I tell you, I figured this thing out. The marks on Betty's throat made me see that something was wrong. At first I thought Garcia had done it—but the autopsy showed no water in the lungs of either of them. Some one, Wright, had put them in that launch! It was your launch. And you had a motive. Jealousy; or possibly even fear. Every one knew how you feared him. But what I had to find out was what motive you could have had for killing *her*."

Morrisette turned at a sound behind him. Two men in plain clothes had come into the room.

"ALL right. Go ahead, Mac," said Morrisette. He brushed past them and disappeared into the hall. The front door slammed. As the men came carefully up to him Talbot Wright heard a motor start outside, then the crunch of tires in the drive. He kept his eyes on the hallway, almost fearful lest Garcia should appear. But at the same time a growing comprehension was spreading through his mind.

He heard another motor driving up as he marched between the two men to the front door. Some one had put a hat upon his head and had thrown a coat around him.

The door swung open and disclosed at the foot of the five stone steps the wire cage of a wagon, and below it the gilt letters, POLICE DEPARTMENT.

The two men helped him down the steps and into the wagon, crowding in on either side of him on the long, upholstered bench. A third man came out of the darkness beside the drive. He carried in his arms a mahogany box about two feet square. Its top was up, and the light from the porch gleamed for a moment on the curved nickle arm inside. The man pushed the box onto the opposite seat, climbed in, and the wagon started with a jolt.

The box slid; the man caught at it; there was a grating noise. And then for a moment, before some one cut it off, there rose above the purring of the motor the savage, triumphant voice of the dead Lucien Garcia, singing a song of love.

No Fool, Elaine—Continued from page 48

saw her approaching. His face got redder.

"No!" he cried to Miss Bonner. "No!" Decidedly, bluntly, almost explosively. "Not that one. The other one. The other one, please!"

"The other one?" repeated Miss Bonner, puzzled.

"Yes." His eyes went boldly around the room. "That one," as they came to rest on the dark head with its coronet of braids.

"Oh! You mean Elaine?"

He nodded.

"But she's busy. Can you wait?"

THE gentleman with the yellow shoes was still burning furiously when Elaine finished the manicure in hand and Miss Bonner said, "All right now."

He charged forward at her words as if he had been snapped from harness, and Elaine, awaiting his approach, had a feeling that a towering mountain was bearing down upon her.

He sat down in the chair opposite her, something stubborn in the thrust of his chin and the determined set of his mouth.

"Right hand, please," said Elaine briskly and impersonally.

She took it between the lengths of her cool, pink-tipped fingers. He did not jump this time. But the blood in his whole body seemed to run panic-stricken toward his ears, his forehead, and the back of his neck. He sat thus, wordless, for the next half-hour, staring intently at the imaginary spot somewhere above and beyond the beautiful face in front of him. The job done, he disappeared in a flash. Behind him lay a two-dollar bill, and from the corridor outside sounded fainter and fainter the sqwunch of his shoes.

"Strange bird," thought Elaine.

She told Gilbert about him that night. Without premeditation. The last thing she meant to do was talk shop to Gilbert. He was not overly proud of the fact that she was a manicurist. Not by any means. Somewhat of a dandy, Gilbert. Window-dresser for Platt, Men's Furnishings de Luxe, Atlantic City, Philadelphia, New York. A catch, you see, for Elaine. After all, what was she but a girl with a pretty face? No position. No money. No family, except an elder sister married to a mattress-maker.

They had arranged to meet at nine for the movies, in the lobby of The Colonial on the Boardwalk. For the occasion, since it was early spring, Elaine had drawn from its camphor bag her last year's tweed suit and donned it, with a wisp of fur about her neck. She looked rather smart, she told herself, as she stood observing herself in the mirrors of the lobby. But as Gilbert swung in, cane on arm, top-coat blowing, a soft felt hat pulled down at just the correct angle over his dark, thin, bored-looking face, she caught a glance of immediate disapproval in his eyes.

"Oh, hello!" he greeted her. And then as his eyes took in the last year's tweed suit: "Is that thing still alive? I thought you threw it away? That's no kind of an outfit to wear to a—if it isn't just like you! Here I was, planning on a few dances over at the Three Bells, and you

show up in that old last year's suit!"

Elaine stiffened. The hurt went right down to the core of her.

"You didn't say anything about dancing, Gilbert. If you don't like the way I look——" Lips tight, she turned to march out of the lobby. But Gilbert caught her arm.

"If we're going in," he said, "let's go! No sense standing here and gassing."

Sulking, he sat beside her. For Elaine the picture was ruined. She sat in the darkness, torn by misgivings and doubts. Oh, it wasn't good, it wasn't good, this affair between herself and Gilbert. Something was lacking in him, a tenderness, a chivalry, a kindness she hungered for. Once he reached for her hand, but she kept it stiffly in her lap. Proud little thing, Elaine, for all the dainty softness of her.

Out on the Boardwalk after the performance, he drew her savagely close to him.

"Don't be a dumb-bell, Elaine. Just because I don't like that outfit on you, and have the gumption to say so, you don't have to go up in the air. What do you want me to do? Tell you you look like a queen?"

Elaine wanted to shout, "Yes! Yes! Yes! That's just what I do want you to do! If you loved me enough I'd look like a queen to you if I wore burlap!" But Gilbert wouldn't understand such talk. She pulled her arm from his hold and put her hand gently on his sleeve.

"Listen, Gilbert. We might as well have this thing out now as later. I could do what you do. I could take all the money I earn and blow it in on pretty clothes. I could dress to kill. But just where would that get us? Here we've been going together two years and we're no nearer getting married now than we were in the beginning. You say you love me——"

"You know I do!"

"And yet you won't deny yourself one thing so's you could put some money into the bank! You buy the most expensive suits, the——"

"And what if I do?" Gilbert did not like to be criticized; it made him cross and impatient. "You take things too seriously. That's what's the matter with you. And I wish you'd stop worrying about our getting married. I'm due for a raise, one of these days, and when it comes through——"

"You'll wait for another raise. I know, Gilbert. You've done it before."

"Well? And who was I thinking of when I did it, if not you? I don't want to get married and lead a grub-steak existence. Want to do your own washing, and cleaning, and——"

"That's not so terrible, Gilbert, if it's your own you're doing."

"No? Well, no wife of mine is going to be a scrub woman. If I can't support a woman in comfort—style even—I won't get married. I don't see living in a three-room flat and scraping together enough to go to the movies once a week."

"Oh, Gilbert, Gilbert, Gilbert!" thought Elaine. "It's not me you love. It's yourself and your comfort. If you loved me you wouldn't wait. You couldn't. Rich or poor, you'd take me. You'd take me and pay the price afterwards." No

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I was disappointed. I felt very bitter as I put away the magazine containing the advertisement. For a week I resisted the temptation to look at it again, but finally I couldn't keep from "peeking" at it. It fascinated me so much that finally, half-frightened, half-enthusiastic I wrote to the U. S. School of Music—without letting my husband know.

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fool, Elaine. You can't be when you've had your worldly education in a manicuring salon for men!

Aloud, she sighed and abruptly changed the subject. Arguing with Gilbert got you nowhere.

They turned into the street of the small family boarding-house where Elaine made her home. Gilbert always grew conciliatory as they neared it. That was because he wanted to go in with her and sit for a while in the dimness of the enclosed front porch. He would pull her down on his knee there, and cover her face with warm, moist kisses, breathing hard all the while. Hot flashes would lap Elaine, and sometimes a little shiver of disgust would shake her. They weren't good, these kisses, these caresses. They did not come of a sense of the dearness of her, but as a sating of his own passions. They left her weak, with a feeling of guilt tugging at her heart.

And so she stopped in front of the door, intent upon forestalling his purpose.

"I'm going right up to bed, Gilbert. I'm tired."

"I'll only come in for a minute."

"Not tonight." She shook her head. Tonight she must think. "I've got a sort of chill. I want to go to sleep."

He must have felt the stubbornness in her, for he said suddenly, "Right then," and with a quick doff of his hat was down the street, swinging his cane as he went.

Elaine went up to her room and crept into bed. She felt curiously tired all over, and her throat was parched. Not such a good idea to have worn the tweed suit. Too early in the season. She lay in the darkness and worried over Gilbert. What to do, what to do? Stick to him or break off? Were all men like Gilbert? Touchy, selfish? Finally she fell asleep. When she woke in the morning two bluish rings circled her eyes.

"I'm getting a cold," she told herself, and tried to fight it off by taking asperin throughout the day.

The next day, when her head was beginning to weigh her shoulders down, the gentleman with the creaking yellow shoes appeared for the third time. He wore another suit, of homespun, that made him look like a hulking tree of a man. But it set off the blackness of his hair and gave to his face a rugged fineness.

"Manicure," he announced this time, without so much as waiting for Miss Bonner's inquiring eye. And added deliberately, "Elaine, please."

A quickly suppressed snicker sounded somewhere in the room. He caught it, and for answer squared his shoulders obstinately. Straight down the room he marched toward Elaine's table, while brighter and brighter flamed the crimson on his neck and ears. He sat down and extended his right hand. He fixed his eyes on the imaginary spot just beyond her head. Wordlessly Elaine set to work.

But somewhere in the course of the next thirty minutes his eyes shifted their focus and came to rest on the white, intent, serious face bending over his fingers. Earnestly he studied it, took in the pallor of the golden-flecked skin, the weary shadow cast by the eyelashes. And:

"Listen, my girl," he said. "Listen. Milk and eggs. Milk and eggs. Every day. Much as you can hold."

Elaine dropped her file. Startled, she looked up. But his eyes were not upon her. They were fastened with a tenacious, innocent intentness upon the imaginary spot just beyond her head.

Iris got him the next time. Elaine was ill. Asperin had not fought the cold off. When he rose to leave Iris had his card. He left it for Elaine. He wanted her to know he had inquired about her.

"Oh, I'll tell her," promised Iris glibly.

That day Elaine, grippey with chills, was lying on a couch in her sister's kitchen. Moments she dozed, and moments she pulled herself up to guzzle hot lemonade administered by her sister, along with some gratuitous advice.

The sister had married unhappily. At least she thought she had. What did she get, she demanded of Elaine, but an ordinary man who thought of nothing else but eating, sleeping, and working?

"But he can't help that." Elaine liked Joe and sought to defend him. "He's working for you and the baby. Give him a chance, Helen. You'll have plenty of good times yet."

"You don't know," burst out her sister resentfully, "you don't know just how bad it is! Going around with a fella like Gilbert you don't see how terrible life can be. You played in luck when you got him. He knows what good living is."

Elaine put her hand wearily to her head, turning her eyes to the wall. She had been wondering the past two days why Gilbert didn't come to see her. He usually 'phoned the boarding-house if he didn't hear from her. They would tell him she was ill and over at her sister's. Surely he would run over.

But the two days had gone by with no sign of him. Now she lay tight-lipped and hard-eyed.

She was wan and frail looking when she reported for work on the third day. The pallor of her skin was not golden but waxy, and she reminded Mr. Cass Wilkinson, as he crossed the floor toward her, of an easter lily wilting after its bloom.

All through the manicure he sat scowling at the imaginary spot just beyond her head. So much concentration did he put into that scowl that he forgot to be embarrassed; and Elaine, glancing up from his fingers for a second, was startled to note for the first time that he was a decidedly handsome fellow. Not in the way that Gilbert was handsome, but in a big, vital, rugged fashion.

She mentioned this fact casually to Genevieve after work. The girl broke into a clamor.

"Say, now! She wouldn't be ditching Gilbert, would she?"

"Not a chance. You don't throw over fellas like him."

And all the while they were arguing spiritedly the foolhardiness of such a deed, Elaine was marching toward her boarding-house, one thought in her mind. She must find out whether Gilbert knew she had been ill.

"Oh yes," the boarding-house mistress told her. "He 'phoned the same day you went to your sister's, and I told him."

A strange smile came and sat on Elaine's lips, a crooked smile which brought no light whatever to her eyes. When Gilbert 'phoned an hour later the voice in which she answered him was hard and constrained.

"Heard you were sick," he greeted her. "Had a cold?"

"Yes."

"Over at your sister's, weren't you?"

"Yes."

"Feeling better?"

"Yes."

Silence. Then, from him:

"I suppose you're angry because I didn't come over to see you?"

"Well?"

"You oughtn't to be. If you'd stayed at the boarding-house I would have been over. You know I would, Elaine. But that terrible hole your sister lives in! The place is so smelly it turns me sick to the stomach. And that squalling kid——"

"Oh!" wailed Elaine into the mouthpiece then. "Oh, Gilbert!" The last shred of her illusion about him was gone now. "If you'd have been sick—if you'd have been sick, I would have gone into a—a *stable* to be with you!" And threw the receiver down upon the hook, stumbling blindly, hotly, toward the sanctuary of her room. She was through with Gilbert. Through! She didn't want his kind of love.

The telephone rang again.

"Elaine," called the boarding-house mistress, up the stairs.

Elaine lay unanswering. She blotted Gilbert from her memory—but the next morning her eyes looked dead.

It was at twelve o'clock, just as she was emptying the morning's final fingerbowl, that there came from the corridor the unmistakeable sqw-unch, sqw-unch, sqw-unch of new shoes. Startled, Elaine flashed Miss Bonner a quick glance.

"But he had a manicure only yesterday," she said.

"Oh, did he?" And then Miss Bonner did an unusual thing. She giggled. Once. High and sharp and shamelessly.

On that giggle he appeared in the doorway. He was wearing gray. Serge. It took the farmerly look away from him, gave him more the aspect of a city man of affairs. Above his broad shoulders his head rose with a staunch erectness. His mouth was set in a sharp, determined line.

He made straight for Elaine, ignoring Miss Bonner completely. Before the diminutive table he stopped. He made no move to sit down, but stood looking, for the first time, straight into the dark eyes with their long fringe of lashes.

"I know," he said. "She's laughing at me." And nodded toward Miss Bonner. "They've all been laughing at me. I've heard them. They think I'm crazy. Well," his eyes held their gaze unflinchingly, "I guess I am. I guess I am crazy. I've been crazy about you from the first minute I saw you!"

Elaine's eyes went wide. Pink dawned under the pale gold of her skin.

"Oh!" she breathed, and sat suddenly down in her chair.

He sat down, too.

"Look here," he said. Openly he

reached across the infinitesimal table and possessed himself of her hands.

"Look here, girl. I know this is no way to do things. But—but I've got to go home, end of the week. And I can't see going without you. I've got a farm—wheat—out in Kansas. There's a house on it, and a garden and chickens—and—and I'd be good to you. Honest. There're people here'll vouch for me. I'll take you around to them. They'll tell you. You'd—you'd like it out on the farm. I—I wouldn't let you work hard. I'm not a rich man but I'd have help for you. And you'll get strong——" Suddenly he leaned further toward her. "Say, now. It's lunch hour. Couldn't we—couldn't we go some place to eat? You'd trust me that far, wouldn't you? Or if you want you can take along one of your friends here."

"No," said Elaine to that. "No." She withdrew her hands, let them fall into her lap, while straight and hard her eyes looked into his. Abruptly, she got to her feet.

"I'll go change," she said. "Be ready in a jiffy."

And a few moments later, before the incredulous eyes of Miss Bonner and the girls, she joined him again and the two went out together.

"My word!" gasped Iris. "She's—she's ditched Gilbert!"

"She's crazy!" From Gloria.

"She's a fool!" "She'll be sorry!" "She'll rue the day!"

But outside, in the sun that drenched the famous boardwalk, a man a trifle under six feet, in a new serge suit and creaking yellow shoes with a shine like a mirror's on them, walked as if the planks under his feet were clouds. His arm supported a pretty, pale girl in a shabby last year's suit, and every now and then the big fellow laughed a great, loud, happy laugh, and looked into her face for approval.

Before the boardwalk's finest hotel they stopped.

"We'll go in here," he said. "We'll go in here, and have soup, and——"

"Not in these clothes," wailed Elaine looking down at her last year's suit. "What would people think?"

"People?" he echoed. "People? But there are no people. Don't you see? There's no one at all! Only a fellow, Cass, and his girl, Elaine!"

He swung her, shabby suit and protest, through the revolving glass doors. He marched her into the main dining-room, down the widest aisle. There was no elegance in the manner with which he seated her, but a tenderness and a hovering solicitude that made her feel like precious bric-a-brac. He frowned over the menu portentously, and he boomed to the waiter, "Now we must have something fine. Something real——" Every one in the dining-room could hear him. There were smiles.

Elaine felt and saw. But she settled back in her chair and let a great warmth flood her heart. She was *not* crazy. She was *not* a fool. She would not be sorry. This was good. Good. Comparing Cass with Gilbert, she knew. This—this was the way a man behaved when he really loved a girl!

Summer Bachelors—Continued from page 56

future, her slender chance for happiness.

"I don't know. To make things worse, Marty has been quietly getting a divorce from that spear-carrier he married, so that he can marry me."

"You'd better."

A wry smile distorted the softness of the other's mouth. "That's a fine line of advice from you! Why don't you marry Tony Landor?"

"I don't want to." Derry's fine air of defiance dropped away from her. "I do want to, enough so that I'm afraid I might want to a lot more. But that's only part of me. The real, sensible, weary part knows that it wouldn't do. Deenie, do you know what I'll probably do if I keep on seeing Tony a lot?"

"How many guesses do I get?"

"All of 'em would be wrong if I gave you a hundred. I'd probably run away with Bev just to get away from Tony."

"Heroic treatment. Why don't you just forget him?"

"Why didn't you just forget Blackie?" retorted the other. A thought struck her. "Do you suppose Blackie could help me, with his hypnotism? He's trying it on Sister Letitia, to make her forget."

"Your sister's case is different," Willowdean replied. "Change couldn't do her anything but good."

"Oh, well; it was just a wild and wooly idea of mine. I'll do my own forgetting. But I do get furious at myself because I can't. Sometimes I look at Blackie's hypnotic crystal on my shelf and think, 'I'd like to have that funny light drown my brain and put it to sleep for a long, long while, and some day wake up in a different world—one without any men in it.'"

The telephone broke in. "It's Claire Elway. For you," announced Derry. "I'll tell her to come around here, shall I?"

Presently Mrs. Elway appeared, cool and trim and as nearly flowerlike as a very smart woman can be. "Am I butting into something?" she inquired from the doorway.

Both girls returned reassuring negatives.

"I always ask that when I expect to stay a long time. My husband"—she smiled at Derry—"is devastated that he couldn't come, too."

"We're not," returned Derry bluntly.

"Oh, don't hold it up against the poor boy," pleaded the wife. "It was rotten sportsmanship, of course, that fake name business. But he's never quite responsible when he's in love. And he was quite seriously in love with you—still is, in fact."

Derry was amused. "Don't you mind?"

"Not in the least."

"But how could he ever expect to get away with it, here in New York?" ob-

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jected Willowdean. "He was sure to run into somebody that knew him."

"Not as likely as you'd suppose," returned the wife. "He spends most of his time in Europe and the rest in the wilds, hunting, so he isn't known to many New Yorkers. Then—" she hesitated—"well, I suppose I owe you an explanation on behalf of the family; he has a sort of complex, dating from his early youth when he got into a scrape and was held up for a stiff sum; the timidity of the very rich man who has inherited his money."

Willowdean flushed darkly. "Does he take us for blackmailers?"

"Oh, no! It isn't that. But sailing under false colors has become a sort of mild mania with him, whenever he thinks he can get away with it."

"Speaking of sailing—" Derry felt an inexplicable inclination to be quite frank with this strange and brilliant little creature— "we were almost headed for Europe. I even considered marrying your husband."

Claire Elway shook a judicial head. "It's no good. I've given it a fair trial. You'd much better marry Tony Landor."

"It's very nice of you to take such an interest," retorted Derry, turned sardonic.

"You're annoyed. You needn't be. I'd have married him myself once, probably, if he'd wanted me to. He didn't. He's never wanted any one, as far as the historical records go, except you. My advice, which you didn't ask and don't deserve, is to marry him while the marrying is good. And now, what about a little lunch-food for the three of us?"

"Can't," said Derry. "Got a heavy date. Bev," she explained to Willowdean, "I'm lunching with him."

"Don't forget your heavy date with me," said Mrs. Elway. "Sometime within the next few weeks, all the week-end we can crowd in. Tony'll be there."

"That means that Derry won't," Willowdean informed her as they went out together.

"Who is this Bev person? Is he important?"

"I can't make out. He's married, but wants to reverse the charges so he can marry Derry."

"Frenchy, if we really mean to bring Tony and her to a clinch, I think a touch of jealousy would put a little pep into the proceedings."

"I don't know whether Derry has the capacity for jealousy."

"Pooh! And yet again pooh-pooh! Any woman who has the capacity for love has the capacity for jealousy. Watch my smoke."

"Go ahead. It's an open game."

Derry, waiting for Beverly Greenway, re-read a week-old letter from her employer, now collecting paintings from the ruined families of Austria. He was much pleased with her conduct of the business and her broadening of the patronage; hinted at a partnership when he should return; meantime had instructed her to close the office for a few days at the end of the month and go to Montreal in search of some valuable documents contemporary with the American Revolution, a mission requiring no small finesse. It gave Derry a real thrill. Business, after all, was her career! She would make a better partner than she ever would a wife. A partnership was, when all is said and done, a partnership; but marriage was, for the woman, a surrender of personality, ambition, purpose, independence of thought and act and even emotion. Not for Derry.

Another letter lay in her desk, under lock and key. She took it out, lingeringly. It was from Anthony Landor, asking her to marry him. Its brevity and simplicity only enhanced the underlying passion of longing. Derry did not read it; she knew it, word for word. Getting out a match, she burned the single sheet, holding it in her fingers until they were scorched and she could no longer bear the hurt. "That's ended," she said to herself, as she licked the stinging skin. "But it doesn't hurt as much as it would later."

Hardly was the ceremonial completed when Greenway entered. He looked haggard, and his voice had lost much of its boyish, vital overtone as he said abruptly:

"What is there in this talk about you and Tony Landor?"

Derry flushed. "Do you realize that you make a noise a good deal like a tyrannical husband?"

"I'm sorry," he said wretchedly. "But I've been almost crazy, Derry."

At once she softened. "I wish you didn't take it so hard, dear boy," she murmured.

"Did any one ever *not* take you hard?" he said in a tone of such savage despair that she did not have the heart to smile. "If you won't let me get free and marry you"—she shook her head—"then I'm going away. I can't stand it, Derry."

"Where to?" It struck Derry with some force that she didn't want Bev to go away. He was always something to fall back on; so dependable, so manageable; some one she could rely on to "stay put" in whatever place in her life she set him. Except as a husband—that might be quite different.

"A couple of fellows I know are going to India to hunt tigers. They want me to go along."

India was *very* far away! And tigers, she had heard, sometimes do the hunting, themselves, on a tiger-hunt. "Don't go, Bev," she murmured.

He wriggled pettishly in his chair. "What good am I doing here—to myself or any one else?"

"I kinda like to have you here. But go ahead, if you prefer the tigers." At a flash, there crystallized in her mind a measure which would not only keep Bev, but would also settle once and for all the intrusive, persistent danger of her making a fool of herself over Tony Landor. "Of course there aren't any tigers in Montreal; but——" she paused, smiling, flushed, provocative.

"What's Montreal got to do with it?" he demanded.

"I've got to go up there for a few days on business."

"Well?"

"I *hate* railroad travel in summer. If you wanted to run me up in the Wheelbarrow"—thus Bev's regal car was dubbed after the first day—"I think it would be nice. And we might find time for a little golf on the side."

"You mean——" he said hoarsely.

"Anything you want me to mean, Bev."

"I want you to mean everything. I want you to mean that if I take you, you'll marry me the very day I can get free."

"Haven't we got the parts reversed?" she rallied him. "In the stories it's the girl, not the man, that finally yields and says recklessly, 'I'll go, if you'll promise to marry me.'"

He had no answering smile for her. "You know how terribly I want you, Derry."

"Well," Derry said lightly, "it's your choice, Bev. Which is it: India or Canada? The lady or the tiger?"

"When do we leave?" he said decisively.

Turning the leaves of her desk calendar, Derry was surprised and annoyed to notice that her fingers were trembling. "Three weeks from Saturday," she said.

He fetched a deep, shaky breath. "All right, Derry."

I guess that'll settle things, Derry reflected violently.

CHAPTER XV

"BY THE way," said Willowdean at lunch a few days later, "Claire Elway's country party is all set."

"Who is going?"

"She's left the inviting to me. Let's figure out a list."

"What's the plan?"

"We leave in four cars, right after the Saturday night performance and reach the lake in time for sunrise breakfast. Return when, as, and if we please."

"How many?"

"Twelve. The extra car is in case of breakdown."

"Sounds like a pipe-organ!" averred Derry. "But, Deenie, I bar one."

"Tony Landor, I suppose."

"You win."

"All right, he's scratched. But I think it's a low trick. Who's in his place?"

"Bev Greenway, unless you've counted him in already."

"I have, but he can't come. Got another date."

A suspicion shot through Derry. "When is this Cook's tour?"

"Last week-end in the month."

A foolish desire for laughter overcame Derry and with it a wildly reckless wish to tell Willowdean why Bev couldn't come, and see what would happen. Why not? She herself knew all about Deenie's affair and this would even it up. She said casually: "I'll set it to music and whistle it that Bev's got another date. So have I."

"Well, you can change it, can't you, if it's a date together?"

"Not so easily! It happens to be in Montreal."

"Are you and Bev going to Montreal—together?" asked the actress slowly.

"That's it."

"Derry, I'm going to ask you a question."

"Shoot. I'll ring if you hit the gold."

With paralyzing unexpectedness Willowdean asked quietly: "Wouldn't you rather it was with Tony?"

Sharp tears stung their way into the girl's eyes. "Deenie, I think you're too rotten!" she cried.

"I thought so. You're doing this to break away from Tony. Well, I won't let you."

"How will you stop me?" defied Derry.

"Oh, I'm not foolish enough to try to stop *you,* you avalanche. I'll go to Bev."

Ominous lightnings charged the air. "If you tell Bev I've told you, I swear I'll never speak to you again."

Willowdean perceived that she meant it; she undertook to inject a little subtle poison into the conversation. "Since you're not going, there's no reason why Tony shouldn't be included."

"Not the slightest."

"They say Claire had quite a flame for him before she married Elway."

"You're not spoiling *my* summer."

"I wonder why you told me about your plans," mused the actress aloud.

"I kinda wonder, myself."

Keen in the ways and wiles of women's mentality, Willowdean decided that it was because the subconscious Derry—perhaps the more profoundly feminine Derry—wished to be saved from the self-imposed adventure. But how to manage it without unforgivable interference? She saw no present way. If she only might get Prenny Smith to help. But she couldn't tell Prenny. She couldn't tell any one, not even Blackie. The final thought—all her thoughts seemed to begin or end with Blackie now—coincided with the mention of his name in Derry's smoothest voice, rousing her with a start from her reverie.

"*What* did you say?"

"I said would you give up Blackie if I'll give up my trip with Bev?"

"If you loved Bev as I love Blackie I'd tell you to go tomorrow," Willowdean answered with such still intensity that Derry hastily mumbled out something about being sorry, adding:

"I don't want ever to love anybody that way. It's too—too devastating."

"Neither did I. But it came. And I'll never give it up until I have to."

"Perhaps you won't have to."

"Oh, yes; I'll have to," answered the other with quiet, foreboding certainty. "Are you coming to the Recherché tonight?"

"No. I'm going to stick at home and make up some back sleep."

"Anyway, that's settled," thought Derry, as she undressed that night, meaning by "that," Anthony Landor. By an affair with Beverly Greenway she would definitely put the other out of the reckoning, for if he ever knew he would, she felt certain, abandon any serious thought of her, and, if necessary, she intended that he should know. But she hoped that the necessity would not arise. She shrank from hurting Tony; nor did she want to hurt herself. Everything would be all right if he proved amenable and willing to abide by her embargo.

As time went on and he did not appear, it began to be painfully apparent to Derry that he *was* willing. At least he was obedient. This exasperated Derry greatly. In the best interests of both of them, she wanted him to abide by the rules as she laid them down. Of course! But he needn't take it quite so calmly.

Having settled the most important issue, Derry felt that she was entitled to some peace of mind. But she failed to achieve it. Normally a sure and sound sleeper, she was finding it difficult to get to sleep these nights. Her brain raced; Bev and Tony; Tony and Bev.

The crystal globe. Possibly that would put her to sleep if she could fix her mind's eye upon it, making everything else blank. She moved it to catch the ray from the electric bulb. No use. The gleam was dead within it. Petulantly she switched off the light and hours afterward, as it seemed to her spent brain, descended haltingly into the dim places of sleep to meet troubled dreams.

The sun struck through the window, full on the sleeping girl. She stirred, she turned and opened weary eyes. Before her the crystal was touched to fire; strange fire which claimed and fixed her yielding gaze. Deep in its convolutions the gleam began to dance; to dance and weave as thoughts move in the brain. A glowing nimbus, spreading, enveloped all the world. Derry, will-less and helpless, let it flood over her. In its radiance she sank and merged until the soul within her was less than a pin-point in a universe of blinding, enveloping, penetrating glory. She gave herself to the glory as to a compelling lover.

So she drifted into a great, strange, dim, unrememberable dream.

CHAPTER XVI

OF ALL the growing circle who were welcome to the easy hospitality of Derry's apartment, coming and going as they pleased, Preston Smith was the only one whom Sister Letitia ever recognized as an element in her own dim, secluded world.

Knowing her confidence in him, Preston Smith was not surprised at being told by his secretary one morning that a lady who said that she was "Derry's sister," was on the 'phone.

"Good morning, Mr. Smith . . . Can you tell me who 'Tony' is?"

"Tony?" He was a bit startled; tried to reckon what this unexpected question might signify. "I expect that you mean a friend of Derry's—and mine."

"She has been calling his name: 'Tony, Tony, Tony.' Quite quietly. I think she wanted him."

Something in the manner of the statement slowed and thickened the hearer's heart-beat. "Is Derry ill?"

"She is dead."

He commanded his voice to say with a forced calmness which surprised himself: "Tell me about it, Mrs. Masury."

"She is lying on her bed, with her eyes wide-open and fixed, and she does not move nor answer when I speak to her. Before she died I heard her call in such a strange way."

"Listen carefully to me, Mrs. Masury. Go in and set your hand on her forehead; then come to me and tell me if it is warm."

"Quite warm. I tried it. And she is breathing regularly. But one may be warm and breathe and move, and still be dead."

"You had better call a doctor at once," he advised. "I will be right up."

He rang for his secretary and gave crisp directions: "Call Miss Willowdean French at the Whitridge Arms and ask her to go at once to Miss Thomas's apartment. Wait! First call Mr. Landor at the Surety Life and ask him to be waiting at the entrance of his building for me. Tell him it is urgent."

"They've tripled your salary, dear"

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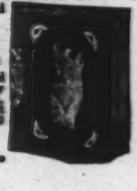

He caught a taxi and picked up Anthony Landor. "Something has happened to Derry Thomas," he explained. "I don't know what. Do you want to go there with me?"

"I'd like to," hesitated the other, thinking of Derry's embargo, "but——"

"She has been calling for you. Unconscious, I infer. Will you go. Yes or no."

"Yes." The two men jumped into the taxi.

At the door Willowdean met them. "She hypnotized herself," she said. "With Walter Blakely's globe."

"Can't you get her out?"

"No. I've sent for him."

"Is she in any danger?" asked Tony. His voice shook.

Willowdean looked intently at him. "I don't think so. You sit down, Tony, and I'll get you a drink."

"Sorry," mumbled Landor. "Hate to make a fool of myself." His knees were behaving in a very unstable manner.

There was a sharp ring at the door, and Walter Blakely was admitted, cool, but anxious-faced. "You didn't move the globe?" he asked Willowdean.

"No."

"I think it will be all right, then."

He entered Derry's room and closed the door. Presently he called Willowdean, then Mrs. Masury. There was murmur of voices, heard too vaguely for interpretation by the racked listeners. Then the elder sister appeared.

"Derry?" said the two in a breath.

"Derry is still dead." She passed into the farther room.

The door of the bedroom opened, showing the outlines of a still figure in the bed. Willowdean beckoned, her eyes brilliant with a purposeful light.

"Come in, you two," she said in a strange, tense voice. "You've got to help us make a decision."

They went in.

CHAPTER XVII

BUBBLES, staggering languidly upward through gray, remote depths to the light, to consciousness; bubbles of thought, of ideation, of self. One of them was carrying Derry Thomas's far-wandering soul back to the world; which one she neither knew nor cared. Curiously light she felt, curiously vital, vibrant. There was a sense of tremendous explorations achieved, cardinal experiences passed through, in her radiant mind. She wondered, amusedly, at the concerned and relieved faces of Blackie and Willowdean, bent over her.

"You're all right, Derry," said the former, soothingly.

"Of course I'm all right. Why shouldn't I be?"

"You hypnotized yourself, angel child!" Willowdean imparted.

"With Blackie's globe? How thrilling! Did I do anything exciting?"

"No."

"I'll bet I did. There's a feeling of conspiracy in this room. Of other people being here."

Willowdean gave out a short cackle, semihysterical in suggestion. The savant made an entry in his note book.

"Posthypnotic supersensitization," he murmured. "She couldn't have seen or heard them, except somnambulistically."

"I felt them. I feel them yet. What did happen?"

"Nothing worth mentioning."

"I'm sure you're lying, both of you. You look positively criminal. How long have I been under? What time is it?"

"After noon."

"Ouch! I've got to fly to the office. Do a nosedive, Blackie; I'm going to dress. How did he get here, anyway? Oh, to pull me out, I suppose. Why didn't you leave me in? I've an idea that I was having a very splendid time of it up there, though I don't know what it was all about." Her gaze fixed itself upon her right hand, widened, swerved to Willowdean's strained face. "How did my finger get smeared up with ink? Have I been spook-writing?"

Willowdean laughed, choked, gulped.

"Oh, well, if you're going to be so mysterious about it, fly out, both of you. I'll find out later what hanky-panky you've been up to with my defenseless soul, Blackie, you science-devil."

"Nothing that could do you any harm; not the slightest," averred the accused, in an eager, plausible, wavering tone as he withdrew.

Derry hurled herself into her clothes and put in a toilful afternoon at the office. But through her busiest concentration shot random glints of mental effort which always fell short of accomplished memory. The constant frustration became an itch in her brain, a demand, a torment. More and more the conviction grew upon her that something of vital interest, vital significance, had taken place while her inner self wandered in a blind, golden radiance beyond the boundaries of consciousness.

Between Willowdean and Blakely, when Derry essayed later to question them, had passed one of these uninterpretable looks which constitute a bond of secrecy. Both were strong-purposed individuals; from neither could she hope to gain much by plea or insistence until the time came for them to speak. Yet both were, according to their standards, honorable-dealing people. Had anything befallen her harmful or portending harm, they would certainly have advised her. It was all a jumbled mystery, to which she held but one possible key. Sister Letitia. She possessed that mechanically retentive memory sometimes associated with mental dimness. But how much had she heard? And how far could her mind be stimulated to give out what it had taken in? Derry could only try.

After dinner, that evening, she went out to help Letitia with the dishes. Her sister was likely to be more responsive when her hands were at work.

"You take the china," began Derry casually. "I feel fidgety."

"Aren't you well, dear?"

"Well enough, but my nerves are queer. I didn't sleep well last night."

Letitia pressed her fingers to her temples. This was the sign of effort to recall and effort defeated its own ends with her. "Last night . . . this morning . . . something . . . I can't think."

"Don't bother, dear." Derry tried another tack. "It was very nice of Professor Blakely to come."

"Yes. But Mr. Preston Smith came first."

Prenny! What might he have been doing there? Derry delivered herself of an elaborate yawn. "Old Prenny's always to be depended on."

"Yes indeed! When I told him that you were dead he came at once."

Indeed! Small wonder! Something of a shock for good old Prenny.

Derry pondered her next experiment, deciding eventually to risk it. "But I'm not dead, you know, sister."

"No?" Letitia was doubtful. "You seem not to be, but how can one really tell? Inside you may be as dead as I am."

Hastily abandoning that line Derry asked, "Did you tell any one else?"

"The other man must have known. He came with Mr. Preston Smith."

"Another man? Not Professor Blakely?"

"Oh, no. Professor Blakely came later."

"Did you know the other man? It wasn't Mr. Greenway?"

"I don't think so. It was some one I don't remember seeing before. Still, I might . . . People are so much alike."

"Couldn't you describe him to me?"

"Dark and quick and fine-looking, I think. No, that was Professor Blakely. Very big, and fair . . . or was that the doctor? I'm so sorry, dear; I can't remember. Perhaps it was the doctor."

"Never mind. It doesn't matter. Not in the least. Were you in my room with them?"

"Only for a few moments. Mr. Smith had a new cross-word he wished to consult me on. We went into the kitchen to spread it on the table; it was quite a large one. He left me there, and I had to close the door soon because they raised their voices so when they grew excited. I think they forgot that one needs quiet to work out the words successfully," she added gently.

Striving to control her own voice against her mounting excitement, Derry inquired presently, "Did you get the puzzle?"

"All but three words. It's strange, Derry, dear," her face lighted faintly, "the voices gave me one of the very words I wanted, a long hard one. It was 'chicanery,' the number seven horizontal."

"How odd! Wasn't that lucky! Did somebody accuse some one else of chicanery?"

"A man said that he wouldn't have any part in such chicanery. He didn't say it very loudly, but it was so sharp and clear that every word seemed to cut through the other voices. They had all been talking at once."

"Chicanery," repeated the girl in the manner of one prompting a forgotten lesson with gentle patience. "Wasn't there something else?"

"Yes. If I could remember. It had a curse in it. He said he'd be damned if—if—something about taking by a trick what he couldn't get fairly and above-board."

Blinder and blinder! "Whom was he talking to?"

"Willowdean French answered him. She said 'That isn't principle; that's caution. I'm not even sure it isn't cowardice, Tony?' "

"Tony! Tony Landor!" It burst from Derry before she could control her astonishment. Then, for further astonishment, she realized that, all along, there

had been in the background of indefinable memory shadows, the figure of Anthony Landor.

"Tony is the only name I know. You were saying it over and over when I found you."

"Yes, of course," soothed Derry in matter-of-fact acceptance. "Can you remember anything else?"

"Only Deenie—how well I remember her as a pale, frail, hungry-eyed little girl at our house!—saying 'No.' Now. At once. If it's delayed, she's going to do something desperate and foolish and irrevocable."

"Did you hear anything more?"

"Mr. Preston Smith said a funny thing in his amusing way. He said: 'Well, I'm an alderman.' After that I shut the door."

"And kept it shut the rest of the time?"

"It must have been an hour, for I worked out nearly all of the 'chicanery' verticals and some were very difficult. Then some one opened the kitchen door to ask me——"

"Some one? Who?"

"Mr. Smith. He wanted a Bible."

"What in the world could he want of a Bible?"

"There are many useful references in the Bible. I always keep it on hand."

"Yes, naturally. But——" Derry's mind groped its way into silence.

"I think I heard somebody say something about everybody swearing. The strange man seemed to be insisting on that."

"That would be what the Bible was for, then," interpreted Derry.

Such was the extent of the patchwork story. There was one clue: Willowdean's reference to the foolish and irrevocable something which she, Derry, intended to do and must be prevented from doing. That must refer to the Montreal trip with Bev Greenway. Well, she still intended to take that. How was Willowdean or any one else going to prevent it by any method connected with the hypnotic trance into which she had fallen? Unless they were planning to put her under again and keep her under, past that date. Had she proved so interesting and scientifically valuable a subject that Blackie and Willowdean had persuaded the others of the justification of going further with her? That might explain Tony's protesting "chicanery"; but how had they overborne his reluctance? If Willowdean had given her away about Bev—but Willowdean wouldn't do that. Still, mightn't she, if she were convinced that her friend's future was going to be compromised? This was the sort of interference that Derry most hotly resented; making oneself uninvited judge and arbiter of other people's morals!

There was Bev. In a day or two she would call him up, if he did not come to see her meanwhile, feel him out as to any aftermath of the mysterious convocation which might have come to him. No oath bound his tongue.

But Bev was unattainable by 'phone. She left word for him to call up. He did not do so. By the end of five days her patience was hardly tried, her curiosity on fire. If he didn't care to see her, if he was backing out—well, let him!

His telegram was a stunning blow, not so much from hurt pride or disappointed expectations, as from sheer surprise, and the enmeshed sensation of being in the coils of a secret control. If Willowdean was the witch, she'd have either explanation or exorcism. She called up the actress, and there was a flame beneath her voice.

"I had a wire from Bev Greenway this noon."

"Yes?" Willowdean was pleased to be non-committal.

"He doesn't say so, but it sounds as if he were going away."

"He's gone."

"Where?"

"To India."

"Is that your doing?"

"I suppose it is, Derry."

Derry asked with deadly deliberation, "Haven't you any sense of honor at all?"

"I'm not going to quarrel with you over the 'phone."

"It's no question of a quarrel. It's more final than that. Don't you consider that you were in honor bound not to tell him you knew about our plans?"

"I've told him nothing. Nothing about that."

"Then you told somebody else to tell him."

"On my word of honor, I've played absolutely fair and square on that, Derry."

Derry believed her. She had to believe her. Her words and tone had borne the conviction of truth.

"Have you seen Bev?"

"Yes."

"What did you tell him?"

Silence.

"Did you hear me? What did you tell him?"

"Yes. I can't tell you."

"Bound by your oath?"

With bitter satisfaction she heard her friend's short gasp. "What do you know of any oath?"

"All about it. Good-bye." Leaving that barb to rankle, she hung up.

Smoothing out Bev's telegram—which had somehow curled itself into a compressed and rumpled ball immediately after its reading—she went over the words again.

I HAVE TRIED TO WRITE
YOU BUT CANNOT. GOD
BLESS YOU AND GOOD-BYE.
B. G.

So Bev had chosen the tiger. By what inexplicable compulsion?

NEXT MONTH

With Bev away and no clue to his detection, Derry finally consents to go to Claire Elway's houseparty—which lasts not a weekend but a week and then some. Tony is there, and Willowdean and Blakely; and this week of hilarity and gay parties determines finally the outcome of the two affairs.

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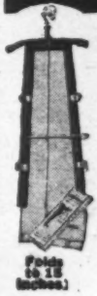

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make my head fair ache—squabbling so!"

"Why must you start an argument, John?" said Molly. "It doesn't help."

"Oh, it doesn't, doesn't it? Well, you can count me out of this fool plan right now. I'm leaving."

As the door closed none too gently, Mrs. Willis sighed. "You girls didn't treat John right. He's a fine young lad, and I don't want he should be hurt."

"He's not hurt," said Gloria callously. "He's sore. Anyway he thinks that Molly's the elephant's tusks." She returned to the burning subject of clothes.

SATURDAY came and after a few million years so did five and a half o'clock. True to the arrangement Mrs. Gerald Carter appeared—to take Molly and the nice little bag under her wing. Her eyes ran approvingly over the pretty tan frock that Molly's mother had so carefully finished the night before.

"We'll be quite alone over the week-end, but I don't believe you'll mind."

Molly was quite sure she would not, as she took her seat by the side of Mrs. Carter in the gorgeous gray limousine.

She knew the drive to Tarrytown was nearly forty-five miles, but it seemed scarcely ten. She could not quite silence a gasp of delight when they swept from the shining highway to the broad grounds of the estate. It was almost like Central Park, with unexpected clumps of trees, sudden flower gardens, closely cropped lawns. And the house—it was too wonderful for a home. More like a post office or library.

A butler opened the door for them. "Mr. Gerald is home," he informed Mrs. Carter, "and will be here for dinner." Mrs. Carter made no comment but she looked anything but pleased as she guided Molly through a hall of unbelievable proportions, up a vast stairway, down a long corridor to a white door with cut glass knob and silver lock. As she flung it open, she said: "This is your room, my dear, and Hulda will take care of you."

Molly stepped inside and gave a gasp of delight. It was just the sort of room a girl would conjure in her dreams. The chaise-longue of gray enamel tapestried in rose was piled high with soft satin cushions of blue, of black, of gold. On the writing desk the rose blotter held the duckiest stenciled gray desk set. It was flanked by a low jar of roses and sweet peas. The chairs radiated comfort, and Molly decided to try every one. The bed—neatly laid out upon the bed——

"Oh, Mrs. Carter! What a wonderful dress!"

Mrs. Carter beamed. "If you like it, my dear, it is yours."

"Mine! That dress mine!"

"Of course. I told the girl in the little French shop to choose something she would like and could wear herself. You two are of a size. I want you to wear it tonight."

"Wear—it—tonight. Oh, Mrs. Carter!" She picked up the wisp of white chiffon with its silver lace overskirt, the white silk knickers, the stiff brassière of silver, the sheer stockings with delicate, frosted beadwork, and the silver slippers.

"All my life," said Molly solemnly, "I have prayed for silver slippers. It's no good trying to thank you, Mrs. Carter."

Mrs. Carter smiled. "I am going to let you dress. Hulda, this is Miss Molly Willis. You take good care of her."

"Yes, madam."

Molly became aware of a large figure in cap and apron, holding her bag. So this was Hulda! As she opened the bag and began to lay out the clothes it contained, Molly watched her in silence and trepidation. Her mother's ivory comb and brush and mirror were arranged on the dressing table. She saw the yellow dress of Gloria's hung in a closet and a blue one and a green one of her own. But when the cerise pyjamas were about to emerge, she was goaded to speech.

"Oh, please—"

But it was too late. Out they came before her anguished eyes in all their crimson blatancy. Then the bag was closed in silence and placed inside the closet door.

Molly floundered mentally for three or four unutterable minutes before she burst out: "Oh, those terrible pyjamas! To think I borrowed them!"

Hulda smiled, a friendly, confidence-inspiring smile. "My man in the old country," she said, "died in a red night-shirt. He was always a great hand for red, too."

"Like these?" asked Molly.

"In color. But his things was mostly flannel, not soft and silky like yours. You could wear that color good. But I guess you want your bath, don't you?"

Hulda disappeared through another door of the room.

Molly was quick at her heels. But when she stood at the open door she understood why so many stories of society life dealt with persons "taking tubs," if by tubs such luxury as this was indicated.

"I could swim in that tub," thought Molly, as Hulda with big, capable fingers began twisting silver taps.

Molly took off her shoes and stockings, her dress and slip. As Hulda still made no move to leave the room, Molly suggested: "I'd rather take my bath by myself."

"Sure," said Hulda. "Just let me know when you're ready for massage." She stepped into the bedroom and closed the door.

Fifteen minutes later, draped in an enveloping towel, Molly peered into the bedroom. "Do you mind handing me my underwear—on the bed."

"But the massage?"

"Oh, that. You can do my face later, when I'm nearer dressed."

"I meant for the body," explained Hulda. "I give Mrs. Carter a hard one twice a day."

"You mean you rub me when I'm naked?" Molly's tone held shock straight from generations of Puritan forbears. She took a deep breath. "Oh, well, if everybody does it, massage ahead. Only don't mind if I squirm. I'm awfully ticklish."

After Hulda's manipulations Molly put on the lovely clothes Mrs. Carter had bought her. Hulda held up her hands in delight when her charge was ready to descend the stairs.

Mrs. Carter was pleased, too. "What a little darling she is, all dressed up," she remarked when she saw Molly.

"It's this lovely dress," said Molly.

Mrs. Carter smiled absently and looked at the clock. "If Gerald's staying for dinner, why doesn't he come down? Oh, here he is!"

Here indeed! The nicest man Molly had ever seen. Gerald had laughing, clear eyes, an English-looking moustache, and straight, shining black hair. He looked so well-groomed in his formal evening clothes!

"This is my son—Gerald," his mother was saying. "Gerald, this is Molly Willis, the little girl who found my emerald pin for me. I thought you were in Boston," she finished abruptly.

"Called off, Mater. It's a long story—" He was addressing his mother but his admiring eyes were all for Molly.

"Never mind that now," tartly. "Molly and I want our dinner."

He turned to Molly with a low bow, offering his arm with a flourish.

It was like a movie, thought Molly, with the hero, the heroine and the—the—the grand duchess.

"We will now proceed," said Gerald, "to the place where the animals eat."

Molly smiled, her eyes taking in the gorgeousness of her surroundings. She determined to watch Mrs. Carter very closely before she attacked the array of cutlery that marked each place.

Fortunately, she sat opposite Gerald. Just seeing him was reassuring, even before he began to say clever, jolly, nonsensical things. Mrs. Carter talked, too, but she seemed a trifle more reserved than she had been in Molly's room. Reserved with Gerald, curiously enough.

"What do we do after dinner, Mater?" asked Gerald.

"I'm taking Molly for a drive," was her rather stiff answer. "Of course you're going to Lucille's?"

"Can't make it, Mater. Lucille's tied up for the evening."

"That's very strange."

HE DID not reply, but after dessert drew out Molly's chair. "I want Molly to see the rose garden. Take half a minute. Come on, Molly."

Molly hesitated and looked at Mrs. Carter. "Shall I?"

"Certainly, if you like; but don't be long. And have Gerald show you his fiancée's miniature. Lucille is quite lovely."

On the porch Molly halted. "What's the idea of running away?"

"Running away! Do you want to rush the mater out before she has finished her coffee?"

"No, but—"

"But me no buts, woman. I'm no goat."

Molly laughed in spite of herself. "Oh, what's the use?"

They descended the steps and turned down a path to the right. Again Gerald proffered his arm and Molly accepted it.

"Like to walk?" he asked.

"Sometimes. Why?"

"I was thinking about your shoes. They're not exactly hiking boots, you know. What say we slither to the summer-house?"

"I'd adore it," said Molly. "Especially if it's near. I don't want to hurt these slippers. Not for worlds."

"If they're that precious," suggested Gerald, "I could carry you."

"No, thanks. I can walk. I don't like to be carried."

"So? You're quite blasé about it. Answer me, woman, have there been others?" He made his voice throaty.

Molly laughed in delight. She lowered her voice, also, to a hoarse whisper. "Perhaps before, but never after!"

"Why, you're good," he cheered her. "A princess in disguise."

IN THE semi-darkness his eyes were bent on hers admiringly. His flattering look left her warm and breathless. But she answered soberly enough: "I'm a working girl all right. There's no disguise possible."

He took her hand and kissed it, first on the fingers and then in the warm palm. "There's no disguise needed," he said, softly. "You're lovely just as you are."

Molly shivered deliciously as she drew her hand away, but aloud she cautioned: "Better behave. Show me that picture of Lucille."

"I'll show you nothing but roses," he answered firmly. "Look out. This path is pretty rough. You'd better let me have your hand."

Molly surrendered her small fist to his warm pressure, and hand in hand they found a snug little bench among the trellised roses. Ideas and impressions had been crowding so quickly since the drive from Nolan's that Molly had had no time to think. She was not thinking now, as he whispered tender words close to her ear. He held her in the hollow of his arm, and as he talked brushed his lips against her hair.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet and jerked her up with him. "That was the car! If we don't hustle, the mater will be on us like the wrath of god." He stopped her at the summer-house steps. "This will have to be good-night. The mater'll squash any other chances."

"Good night," said Molly demurely, and raised her eyes to his.

"You little devil!" He swept her into his arms and held her for a breath-taking moment while his lips found hers.

"Gerald," called his mother's voice through the fragrant dusk. "Gerald."

He released Molly at once. "Don't be afraid, beautiful," he whispered. "She couldn't see us. But we've got to go."

Molly in a haze of emotion let him guide her to the house.

"Gerald!"

"At the porch steps, Mater. Did you want me?"

"There's a 'phone message for you," said Mrs. Carter impatiently. "Take it in a hurry if you're coming with Molly and me. It's almost too dark now to see the country."

Gerald was gone for a moment. When he came back he said: "The call was about a party that's on for Tuesday. May I use the town car that afternoon, Mater. I want Terrence to have it at

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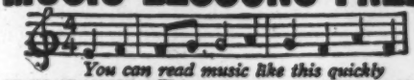
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the Madison Avenue entrance of The Strathmore at two o'clock."

"Oh, I suppose so, Gerald. But come on. We want to drive."

And they did. Miles, through the soft, warm darkness, with Mrs. Carter's voice occasionally breaking the stillness, or Gerald's teasing one, or less often Molly's. "If I were rich," thought Molly, "I would drive every night."

When they returned Gerald helped her out of the car; and as Mrs. Carter turned to give an order to the chauffeur he made a courtly bow, brushing her fingers with his lips. "Good-night, my little princess!"

Molly hugged the words to her heart. Not just princess, or even little princess. But *my* little princess. His! His!

In the morning she took time to make her most effective toilet. The evening had been a triumph. Breakfast might well be another.

It might have been—but it wasn't. Mrs. Carter greeted her kindly when she appeared. "How fresh you look, my dear, in that little green dress! We are breakfasting directly and then going on a little boating excursion up the Hudson. You would like that?"

"I'd adore it."

"That's good. It's too bad Gerald had to leave early or he might have gone with us."

"Has he gone?" asked Molly quickly.

Kind, comprehending old eyes noted the tell-tale flush. "Yes. He asked me to leave his good-byes for you."

Breakfast might have been ashes and sawdust for all of Molly's interest in it. Lifelessly she gathered together her light coat, her mother's pretty scarf and the small sport hat that matched the green dress, and trailed after Mrs. Carter.

But the day was not made for gloom. The water gave gurgling chuckles when it splashed the boat. The air plucked gaily at her sleeves and skirt. She couldn't stay unhappy on such a day. Her mood lightened. After all, perhaps she herself had driven Gerald away. That would be comfort.

If he were engaged to one girl and he began to like another, of course he would flee. She smiled to herself in satisfaction—if ever she had a chance at Gerald! "Good-night, my little princess!" Good-night, but not good-bye if she could help it.

WHEN Molly arrived home that evening she found John already at the house, talking with her mother. She called breezily: "Hello, everybody. I'll be right in."

She dropped her hat and bag in her room, powdered her nose and joined them.

John was in his usual place on the davenport. Her mother was in the big arm chair. Did he rise at her entrance? Not John. He sat as if glued to the seat and patted the cushion beside him. "This place has been waiting for you," he said. "Come here."

But Molly did not come. She dropped into a chair next to her mother. "I had a gorgeous time," she began. "Servants in droves, much food, wonderful house. A maid to bathe and dress me. And guess what?"

"What?" asked John and her mother in the same breath of expectant interest.

"Mrs. Carter gave me the prettiest dress I ever saw. Slippers and dress and stockings. Wasn't she the angel?"

"Where are they?"

"In my room," she replied to John. "I'll wear them for you sometime. The mater will find them on the bed when she goes in."

"The who?" inquired Mrs. Willis.

Molly yawned. "I said, the mater. That is what rich people call their mothers."

"Well," sniffed Mrs. Willis. "As long as we're not rich the old name will do for me. It always sounded real good from you. But I don't see why you didn't put on the pretty dress for me and John to see."

"Oh, I'll wear it soon enough. John adores this green dress. Don't you John?"

"Don't I what?" asked John inattentively. "Say, Molly, who called whose mother that mater word you been practising on us?"

"Gerald for one. Why?"

"Who's Gerald?"

"Mrs. Carter's Gerald, if that's what you mean. He's her son."

"Was he there?"

"Where? At home with his mother? What a question! He didn't leave home on my account."

"You're darned right he didn't. Spent the day with him, did you?"

"What's he talking about, mother? I thought you all would want to know about my week-end. If not, I'm tired. I'll go to bed."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," put in her mother firmly. "If I were John I would shake you. Acting so contrary. You children take a walk and talk sense. Get your scarf, Molly, it's cool out."

The scarf was in the hall, but for all of John it might have been in China. Gerald would have had it on her shoulders before her mother had stopped speaking.

She fetched the scarf, twisted it around her throat, and started for the door.

"Come on, if you're coming," she called over her shoulder.

John took her arm and walked her down the front steps. He still retained her arm as they paced the length of the block, holding it more firmly as they crossed the street.

"Must you hang on to me?" inquired Molly out of a long silence. "I'm hot as all get out."

He dropped the arm abruptly. "Awful for you to be hot," he muttered. "Far as that goes, I'm hot too."

"A gentleman," she remarked, "does not clutch a lady. He proffers his arm."

"You sound like an etiquette book," retorted John. "I guess I know as much about gentlemen as you do about ladies."

"Why, John Maston!"

"Hell! When I think how I've been counting the hours to this evening! What's the matter with you? You're acting like the very devil tonight."

Devil! Another man had called her a devil twenty-four hours before. But a different kind of a man, in a different kind of way. She smiled at the memory.

"Don't laugh at me," shouted John.

"I wasn't even thinking about you," replied Molly hotly. "Just then I was thinking of some one pleasant—well—pleasant."

"Who?"

"I forget."

"You don't. It was Gerard."

"I don't know any Gerard."

"That woman's son. Don't lie out of it."

"Oh, you mean Gerald. Certainly I know Gerald. He's wonderful."

"How?"

"Every way, I guess. He has a wonderful moustache, wonderful clothes, wonderful manners—"

"Tripe!"

"Coal-black hair. Nice eyes. The most exciting smile. And he kisses——"

"What did you say? Kisses! Did that ape dare to kiss you?" He swung Molly around to face him. "Did he? Look up, Molly. Did he?"

"——your hand," finished Molly demurely, "in the most fascinating way."

"Well he can keep his old face off of you. Let me see him, and I'll fix his pretty manners for him, and his face, too. I'll knock his block off!"

"Yes, you would," flashed Molly. "You mean you'd try. You are the roughest, uncouthest, horridest thing I ever saw. If you knew how you grated on me! All evening I couldn't help but notice——"

"YOU couldn't! Maybe I've not been noticing, too. You're acting like a little fool."

"Take your hands away from me, John Maston. You—you—you rube. I'm going home."

"You're mighty right you are." He gripped her arm until it hurt and rushed her half stumbling, half running to her own door. The length of the block he did not say a word, but at the steps he halted her. "I never thought I'd see a night when I wouldn't want to kiss you. But you couldn't hire me, tonight. It'll be a long day before you see me again!"

"I'll never see you again. Never!"

"Suits me."

Next morning Gloria was sympathetic. "I'd a come over last night," she assured Molly. "But there are times when I feel almost like I could live without your John."

"You could last night all right," agreed Molly. But she refused to add anything. On the subject of her visit, however, she was more vocal. Mrs. Carter, Gerald, Hulda, Gerald, the motors, Gerald, the dinner, Gerald, received a good many paragraphs.

"He ain't so slow, that baby," praised Gloria. "And you. Didja see the hectic flush when he lamped you? Any signs of dates?"

Molly's first answer was an honest negative. But Gloria would have none of it. "Sure you made a hit," she averred. "Any day, little Gerald'll be rolling over and playing dead. Don't I know?"

The more Gloria talked, the more convinced Molly became. Gloria was no easy mark, her judgment was generally reliable. You could tell by the way Gerald had acted that he liked her.

John was in her thoughts rather often. But he did nothing Monday to improve the parting of the night before. It was a long evening.

On Tuesday with casual nonchalance she announced to Gloria: "I asked at the

office for one-thirty lunch-hour instead of twelve."

Once on the street Gloria was all for doing the shops. But Molly was insistent. "Let's go over to Madison Avenue."

Gloria halted dead in her tracks. "What for, Molly Willis. You've got something under your hat."

"Don't be silly, Gloria. Come on."

Gloria came, but reluctantly. "Why do we slow up in front of this morgue? The Strathmore's the deadest cemetery in New York."

They walked the block in front of it, then Molly wheeled them around. "Is this police duty?" asked Gloria. "This is a helluva lunch hour. No food, a goshawful walk, a dim wit for company. Mother of Joshua, do I deserve this?" She gave harsh, raucous groans.

But Molly had ceased to hear her. "He's coming," she whispered. "Coming now!" She broke into a quick walk as a tall young man with a tiny moustache emerged from the doors of The Strathmore. With him was a slender, vivacious girl who was chattering eagerly. Another young couple followed. Molly dragged Gloria forward.

She noticed fleetingly that he was holding the girl's arm in a close grasp, just as John had often held hers. But it was the expression of his face that caught her attention particularly. His eyes were not mocking nor teasing, only tender, as he bent his head to catch what the pretty girl was saying. Then he laughed and gave her a little shake: "Oh no, you won't, old thing. We can still make it in nothing flat." His tone was so different from the one that Molly had heard that she would not have recognized it. Lucille! Why, he must worship her.

Molly had intended to speak, but when she realized that she was no more than a shadow in his path, something between him and the motor, words would not come. She moved dazedly aside. She saw Gerald help the girl in, saw them lean toward each other. Then the other two came up and entered the limousine, and the four drove off.

Gloria spoke then: "What's the big idea?" she demanded. "Who's your swell friends?"

Molly did not answer, but in a dry little voice begged: "Let's get a cup of coffee, Gloria. I'm—I'm hungry."

Back in the store's dressing-room, later, she threw her arms around Gloria and burst into wild sobbing.

"Glory, Glory, dear, that was Gerald! That man at The Strathmore. Did you see him? He never saw me! Oh, Glory, I was beneath his notice!"

Gloria held her tight. "I knew it. But Molly, stop. You gotta stop! Don't cry. Listen, I'm laughing. Was that big cheese Gerald? It's lucky you seen that bozo in the strong light. He looked better in mama's dark garden, didn't he, Molly? That silly little fuzz under his nose—and a cane. Oh, my suffering snakes, a cane!"

Molly dried her eyes and presently went back to work. Gloria had plenty of sense, much more than she herself had. If Gerald looked like that to her—but he couldn't. He was wonderful still. Or was he? If a man forgot you, was he wonderful? A girl had to have some pride. And while Molly's fingers were counting out three-fifty, four, or five, her mind was fighting with one of the struggles of her young life. But she won. By the end of the afternoon Gerald was laid to rest—more or less quietly.

One evening a few weeks later, Molly's mother met her at the door on her return from work.

"Supper's ready," she said. "Come right on, we got company."

"Who?"

"Wash your hands, and come on back. I don't want the mashed potatoes cold."

Molly dashed cool water on her face, added a touch of rouge and hurried after her mother. In the hall, seated as if he were in the one place he did belong, was John. As she entered he arose quickly.

"I've been a damn fool, Molly," he said as he came up to her. "I knew you were right all the time. I *am* a rube. But—I hope you'll forgive me, dear——"

"What," demanded Molly, "is that under your nose?" She touched his upper lip with an exploring finger.

He flushed with embarrassment. "It—it's a moustache, Molly dear, like you want."

"Get a shave and get it quick," said Molly tersely. "But what are you trying to do now?"

He had taken her hand and was bending over it with puckered lips.

"I'm kissing your hand," he explained gently. "You know, kissing you like a gentleman."

"Oh," cried Molly, jerking her hand away. "Don't you ever use that word to me. I hate gentlemen! If you must kiss me, kiss me like a—like a rube!"

The Continuity Girl—Continued from page 63

after . . . I must always think of that."

"I'm an American citizen," he resumed, "and I've been so long on this side that I guess I feel more American than English. It's more than ten years since I left."

"And you've never been back since—not since the war?"

"Ah," he said rather hastily, "the American army wouldn't have me. I did my bit with the loan drives, though." He spoke hurriedly, as though to forestall further questioning. With a quick gust of irritation he realized that he was explaining—no, excusing himself to this drab person. He turned away.

Thereafter, David Heathfield steered clear of Miss Janson. He had quite forgotten her when, a week after their first conversation, she accosted him.

It was evening. Work was over for the day and Heathfield was leaving his dressing-room to go to his car. As he hurried along the ill-lit corridor he stood back to let a woman pass. But she stopped before him. It was Miss Janson.

She gave her little cough. "Oh, Mr. Heathfield," she said, "might I speak to

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you for a minute? I won't keep you."

He took off his hat and nodded perfunctorily, at the same time glancing at his wrist watch. Rather crossly he asked himself what she wanted. Money? A favor from Eckstein? She was nervous he noticed.

"Perhaps we could go into your room?" she suggested timidly.

"If you don't make it too long," he replied. "I'm late for an appointment as it is." He turned back, pushed open the star-emblazoned door, switched on the light. Then he took out his pipe and began to fill it with quick, methodical gestures.

"Oh, Mr. Heathfield," she began, and the repetition of the words vaguely irritated him, "there's—there's a young girl here in whom I take an interest——"

"Well?" he mumbled, pipe in mouth, scratching a match.

"They call her Babette."

His pipe was lit now. Miss Janson's eyes were on his face as he puffed once, twice, blew out the match and dropped it with an elegant gesture.

"What about Babette?" His voice was deep, deep and hard.

"I—I wanted to tell you," Miss Janson went on rather awkwardly, "that Babette is only a child. Barely seventeen. She's a good girl, Mr. Heathfield and—and I don't want her made unhappy."

David Heathfield said nothing. Emboldened by his silence, the woman warmed to her appeal.

"You're very attractive to women and I don't suppose you understand what it means for a young girl like Babette to be taken notice of by a man like you. This is her first engagement in pictures, Mr. Heathfield, and for the star to single her out as you're doing—well, it's turning her head. It's not as if she had any restraining influence at home. I've spoken to her——"

"Ah," put in Heathfield, "you've spoken to her, have you?"

"Yes, indeed I have, but the child's head is turned already. She won't listen to me. And so I made up my mind to appeal to you, Mr. Heathfield. This girl means nothing to you. Won't you leave her alone—before it's too late?"

"Would you like me to tell you how I've risen to the top, back in that dog fight on the Coast, Miss Janson?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"By minding my own business. I mind my business and I expect other folks to mind theirs. Is that plain enough?"

ARROGANT and splendid in the full glory of his masculine good-looks, he gazed down upon the unassuming figure in black. A flush of red appeared in Miss Janson's pale cheeks. For a while she remained silent, twisting and untwisting her fingers. At length with an effort she said:

"Be merciful! You're at the top, you can afford to. If you want amusement there are plenty of girls here in this studio to whom what you're looking for is a passing adventure, just an adventure and nothing more. Don't spoil little Babette, Mr. Heathfield!"

"I can't stop here all night listening to this sob stuff," he cut in brutally. "And you've got a nerve, butting into my private affairs."

"You're—you're going on with this?" she demanded. By way of answer he picked up his hat, crammed it on his head, and started to push past her to the door. She stepped in his path.

"Don't force me too far, *Arthur Bragge!*" said Miss Janson.

He halted, frowning, and took his pipe from his mouth.

"How did you get hold of my name?" he challenged in a puzzled voice, and peered into her face. "Now that I look at you, I begin to think I've seen you before somewhere. Was it in England?"

She nodded.

"Where?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Well," Heathfield remarked unconcernedly, "David Heathfield is now my name. My name by law. Will you please remember that?" He thrust his pipe in his pocket and turned towards the door.

"You've got to let this girl be, do you understand me?" Miss Janson cried out suddenly. "You've got to let her be!" Her voice shrilled, breaking on a sob. Heathfield adroitly slipped by her into the corridor.

Outside on the wind-swept boulevard his limousine was waiting. As he opened the door a faint squeak of delight resounded from its snug, dark depths.

"Dave! I thought you were never coming."

"I was delayed, honey!"

"Drive us to the Café Doré on 55th Street!" Heathfield instructed the chauffeur.

He put in the "us" for the benefit of a prim figure in black that watched them from the curb.

After three weeks' intensive work the climax of the highly dramatic story had been reached. All through the gray, wintry morning the three of them had been rehearsing the dénouement, Heathfield, Roma Fane and Antonio Carreras, who played the part of Alvaro, tango dancer and blackmailer.

The scene was the library of the Earl's London house. Annabel, his beautiful American Countess, estranged from her husband and driven desperate by blackmail, takes a pistol from the drawer of the desk to shoot herself. Philip, the Earl, arrives in the nick of time and wrests the weapon from her. He insists on taking her place at the impending interview with Alvaro; and, when the blackmailer presents himself, pretends to have known all along of the Countess's indiscretion.

Infuriated by the ruin of his schemes, Alvaro snatches up the pistol which has been left lying on the desk and fires at Philip. The Earl falls as Alvaro dashes away. Annabel bursts in, and believing her husband to be dead, sobs out over his body the love she has been too proud to confess. But Philip is only wounded. He regains consciousness and hears his wife's admission. Fade-out with the couple locked in each other's arms.

That morning Roma Fane was at her dullest. Crookshank stormed. His bitter tongue seared her, seared them all like a white-hot flame. Like many stupid people Roma was obstinate; she grew sulky under the last of Crookshank's sarcasm. For hours they went over and over the swift sequence of scenes until the nerves of them all were rubbed raw.

At last came a change. Slowly the dramatic fire of this uncouth, irascible red-head began to kindle the touchwood of the inflammable temperaments on the set. Driven to the verge of tears, Roma Fane, looking as lovely as an American Beauty rose, forgot her sulks. The friction overcome, suddenly the machine worked smoothly. Twice they ran through the scene without a hitch.

Then Crookshank grunted; and everybody, up to the stolid hands crouched at their lights above the set, sighed in satisfaction at this recognized signal of approval. The director raised his eye-shade, glanced at his watch. They would break off for lunch, he told them, and immediately after the interval start shooting.

ON THE instant all the studio was astir. It was half-past two; everybody was famished. Swiftly the set was deserted. Miss Janson was left alone.

Note-book in hand, with the precision of an automaton, she made her customary reviews of the properties required for the scenes—Alvaro's menacing letter which Annabel was to find on entering the library; the tray with whiskey decanter, siphon, and glasses; the pistol. The automatic had been left lying on the desk, and before she placed it in readiness in the drawer Miss Janson dexterously pulled back the slide to make sure that the blank cartridge was in the breach.

Pistol in hand, she paused for an instant, then laid the weapon down on the desk and opened her large leather bag. From it she drew a second automatic. At that moment a waggish voice cried: "I'll come quiet!" and Wilson, Crookshank's assistant, peered out from the back of the set, his hands above his head, his face twisted into a comic semblance of fright.

"Two guns?" he exclaimed. "Who are you going to hold up, Miss Janson?"

"One's mine," she smiled. "I happened to notice that it's the same model as the other."

"Loaded?"

She nodded and put her pistol back in her bag. "With all these hold-ups you never know!"

"You're right!" Wilson agreed. "Don't get 'em mixed up, that's all! Coming to eat?"

"In a minute. I want to wash!"

The continuity girl laid the property pistol back in the drawer and finished her careful survey. Then, with her brisk step she walked to the iron door which shut off the studio from the wash-rooms and the administrative offices.

The door stood ajar. As Miss Janson reached it she heard a man's voice on the other side.

"Tonight then?"

It was David Heathfield speaking.

Another voice, a soft breathless voice, crooned the answer happily: "Tonight!"

"How'll you manage?"

"I've told them at home I'm going to stay overnight at my cousin's over in Queens."

Miss Janson plucked open the door. David Heathfield stood there at the foot of the stairs, his back to her, his arms enfolding a slim young form which clung to him in mute surrender. As the door

groaned Babette's startled face looked up over the man's shoulder. When she saw Miss Janson she uttered a little cry, broke away, and darted up the steps. Heathfield swung round quickly. But Miss Janson did not budge.

"What's that girl doing here?" she demanded. "She's not wanted today."

"I haven't the faintest idea," he rejoined insolently. "Do you mind letting me pass?"

"I warned you to leave that child alone," said Miss Janson.

"You damn well mind your own business!" Heathfield cried hotly.

"This is my business," she answered. "Do you know who I am, Arthur Bragge? I'm Margaret Lambert's sister!"

The revelation staggered him as his face plainly showed. But his brazen self-assurance did not forsake him.

"Is that so? Then you're English? I thought I'd seen you before. Dear little Maggie! How is she?"

"Maggie died," said Miss Janson.

His eyes grew wary.

"That's terrible," he ejaculated hastily. "Poor little Maggie! I was frightfully upset at having to leave her suddenly like that. But I was out of a job, been without work for months, and I got the chance of an engagement in New York. I purposely didn't tell her I was going because I knew she'd try to stop me. And I had to have the money. But I wrote—she must have had my letters——"

"You never wrote," said Miss Janson.

"I swear I did."

"Don't lie to me! You didn't write, you sent her no money, you abandoned her in her shame——"

Staring somberly before her, she broke off. Her dark eyes, her face with its pallor and contorted features, were terrible in the intensity of their expression. The man tried to pacify her.

"What you've told me about dear little Maggie is a fearful shock," he began hastily, "a fearful shock. If you'd only let me know——"

"What address had I to write to? Besides, you knew before you went away. Did that move you? Did you help her out with money even? I was as poor as she, touring with a wretched company in the Midlands and I left my job to be with her in her trouble. I had to pawn my only decent dress to buy her food." Her hands began to tremble. "Do you really think I'm going to stand by and let you do a thing like this again and get away with it? No, I tell you! No! No! No!"

He began to recover his aplomb.

"I was little more than a boy. We all make mistakes when we're young. I admit I was thoughtless——"

She gave a bitter laugh.

"Thoughtless! Oh, my God!"

He patted her arm.

"Babette won't be harmed. You can trust me, Miss Janson."

The familiarity of the gesture seemed to enrage her. In a white fury she shook off his hand.

"Trust you? I'd sooner trust a snake!"

He gave her an ugly look.

"Don't you think you're dramatizing things a bit?" His nonchalance was studied; he meant it to wound. "You're not a scenario writer, you know. You're the continuity girl. I should stick to the continuity if I were you, Miss Janson."

"Continuity?" she flamed back at him. "Men like you see life as an endless circle round which you may travel with impunity, strewing in your path heart-break, misery, death! But continuity implies a beginning and an end, the bringing of the things that come after into sequence with the things that go before. Don't you talk to me of continuity! For you continuity means retribution—punishment!"

He laughed arrogantly.

"That girl is not going to your apartment tonight!" said Miss Janson.

"That shall be as she and I may choose!"

"I'm warning you," her voice grew hoarsely shrill, "I'm warning you to do the decent thing while there's yet time."

"Aw, go to hell!" he cried. Roughly he pushed her on one side and swung through the door.

QUIET on the set in the heat and glare of the limes, the quiet of slow, deliberate movement, of lips that move and bring forth no sound. The hissing arcs flung down their barrage of blinding light; the cameras drowsily purred. At his table Crookshank, posed like a tiger ready to spring, barked out staccato sentences as he acted every gesture of the players.

Banned to a discreet distance out of sight, the house orchestra was playing Saint-Saëns's "Danse Macabre." The haunting melody of the dance of death, with its merciless quickening rhythm, beat out across the hush of the vast studio to where David Heathfield, alone on the set before the lenses of the whirring cameras, awaited the blackmailer.

Words and gestures flowed from Crookshank without a pause. He was all movement, like a flag in a high wind.

"Come on there, that butler! *'A gentleman to see you, my lord!' 'Show him in here, Parker!'* Slowly now, Parker, slowly off, damn you! Now for it, Philip, to crush this blackmailing tea-hound! Up to the whiskey decanter to help you over the ordeal! Now, Parker! Where the hell's that butler? Make it snappy, Alvaro! You want to get your money and beat it quick, see? *'What?'* you say, *'Annabel not here?'* That's good, that's good, Dave, slowly round. *'In the future, my friend, your dealings will be with me!'* Not too fast, Alvaro! *'That may be awkward for you, Lord Wellminster. Or should I say, for Lady Wellminster?'* Hold yourself back, Philip; you're fighting for your wife's reputation, remember! *'In what way?'*—that's right, very cool. You're too quick, Alvaro, easy now! You're deciding in your mind that the time has come to spill the beans. Now you can warm up; you're telling him about that night at Cannes. *'And what do you propose to do about it, Lord Wellminster?'* Now then, Philip, let it go! *'To give you the hiding of your life, you scum!'* At him across the desk! Back, Alvaro, the pistol as you go! Fine, fine——"

Above the wild hammering of the music the shot crashed out. Philip reeled backwards and Alvaro, casting down the weapon, fled away. A thin blue haze hung leisurely in the livid glare. The countess made her frenzied entrance, embraced the figure on the couch and then——

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Crookshank was roaring like a bull. "Come on, Roma! Come on, blast it! What the hell are you waiting for?"

A woman's piercing scream rang through the studio. Roma Fane was reeling against the door by which she had entered. Her violet eyes, wide with horror, were staring at the long crimson smear that, from elbow to wrist, besmirched the creamy whiteness of her bare arm. In two strides Crookshank was in the circle of blinding light, bending over the couch. The whirring of the cameras was stilled; but under the vaulted studio roof the muted measure of the dance of death beat on like the stamp of skeleton feet.

Then slowly Crookshank drew himself erect.

"Stop that damned music! Dave's dead!" he said.

Some one plucked his sleeve. It was Wilson, his assistant, his gray actor's face haggard with fear. In one hand he held the pistol which he had picked up from the floor, in the other the loaded clip. He whispered in Crookshank's ear, signing with his head toward the director's table to which Miss Janson had returned. She sat impassive, her hands folded in her lap. She had closed her note-book and slipped it beneath its elastic band as was her habit when the day's work was done.

Hot Saturday—Continued from page 69

it very well. You had to hand her that.

The orchestra played and all four of them rose and danced.

When Wilbur said he could dance he was right. His long legs, lubricated by a drink, moved in perfect time. He didn't hold her very tightly at first, but the farther they went the closer together they came. In their contact was something wholly good.

But people kept coming—people she knew. Outside, motors roared and puttered and backed into parking spaces. Was the whole town coming tonight? She began to wish they had just gone home together. Here in a crowd Wilbur wasn't the same and neither was she. He was silent and she was worried.

There were John Romer and Conny Billop . . . O Lord! And Conny was visibly lit, and Conny lit was a menace.

Wilbur left her to propel Alma dutifully about the floor, and she and the Doc suffered together—for dance he certainly couldn't. And all the time she was watching Wilbur over his shoulder. She saw Eva angling for him with her eyes, smiling at him—watched him go and ask her for a dance.

And then, to her amazement, she saw Walt Gibby coming straight to her. She hadn't danced with him in a year.

"Well, Ruth . . . How about it? Just for old time's sake."

Nerve? He had more of it than any one she ever knew. For old time's sake she would have liked to smack him on the ear. But she was afraid of him. She rose, smiling up at him sweetly.

"That's awfully nice of you, Walt," she said. "You're looking splendid this evening."

Feed him applesauce—that was the idea. Keep him friendly.

"So are you, Ruth. You get prettier every day."

"O Walt!" she laughed. "What have I got that you want?"

Suddenly he put on a solemn voice.

"Well, you've got a lot that I want, if it comes to that, Ruth."

She could hardly believe she heard him right. At this late date was he trying to start all over again? She yearned to snub him, but she didn't dare.

"Thanks, Walt."

He said no more till the music stopped, and then, to her further amazement, he tried to lead her through the door out into the dark. And right under Eva's nose! What was he up to? Was he tired of Eva, or was he just trying to make her jealous and get even with her for flirting with Wilbur? Or was he . . .

One thing was certain—she wasn't going. She wasn't going outside the door with any one but Wilbur.

"Come on. Let's get a little fresh air," he urged when she hung back.

"No, thanks, Walt. It's too cool. I'd rather stay in, if you don't mind."

Walt was not used to refusals. His hand tightened on her arm.

"O come on, Ruth! You never used to be so slow."

She held back hard.

"And you always used to be so careful!"

She delivered her dig in a voice as cool and smooth as the blade of a knife. She wished immediately she hadn't said it. She could see him wince. Deliberately, smiling all the time, he dug his fingers hard into her arm, so that it hurt—then turned away.

"Excuse me," he said with a smile over his shoulder.

She stood glaring silent rage at his retreating back.

BUT she had not long to think about him. Too much was happening. Wilbur and Eva dancing together caught and held her eye. Wilbur was having the time of his life. His one drink was just what he had needed to jar him loose.

She was in a terrible humor now, so that she could scarcely keep smiling. And stranded alone on the edge of the floor without a man! That in itself was a painful situation.

She felt a hand on her arm and looked up at John Romer. His eyes were perfectly grave as he held out his arms.

They danced in silence, and when the music was over Romer without a word deposited her beside Alma, bowed, and went his way. And Wilbur, with his eyes on hers, was threading a tortuous route across the floor, coming back to her from dangerous encounters all unspoiled.

But he didn't quite make it. Near the stairs he had to pass a group of men—Archie Platt, Conny Billop, Walt Gibby, and some others. They all turned to look at him.

With her hands clenched in anxiety she watched and hoped he would pass them by. But of course he didn't. He was opening up like a morning glory. He was a little friend to all the world since he took that drink . . . Walt Gibby grabbed him and he shook hands all around, laughing and shy. Conny Billop, red and garrulous, began telling a story. A few minutes more and they might all go out together. It would never do. She determined to intervene.

She ran across the floor, took a risky little slide on its waxed surface, and brought up before them, laughing, as though she hadn't known herself just where she was going.

"Why, hello, Archie!" she greeted. "I haven't seen you for a coon's age. Hello, Conny. I never saw anything like the way you men flock together. You might think there wasn't a girl on the floor. I just thought I'd butt in . . . What are you all talking about so busily, I'd like to know?"

"Well, if you want to know," Walt grinned at her brutally. "We were talking about you."

She smiled back at him bravely.

"I trust it was something awfully nice," she said.

Music started. She turned toward Wilbur, relapsing gracefully, triumphantly into his arms, smiling back over her shoulder at her assembled foes as she bore him easily away.

"What did they say about me?" she demanded, laughing. "I'm just dying to know."

"Not a thing that I heard," he said. "But I wasn't paying much attention."

Almost everybody was dancing now. The party was getting warm. When the music stopped the clapping for an encore was a spontaneous crash with a few shouts and whistles thrown in.

Wilbur clapped as hard as any, but before the music began again, Ruth laid a hand on his arm.

"Let's go out a little while and sit in the car . . . Do you mind? I'm getting so warm."

Outside a cool breeze blew, mountains loomed black and huge, the sky blazed with the great stars of high country on a clear night. Wilbur stood a moment looking up at the stars.

"Say!" he exclaimed with a thrill of discovery in his voice. "They've got stars in three colors out here—silver, blue and gold—I never noticed that before! Is that the Little Dipper over there?"

"You can't prove it by me." She laughed. "Where did we leave the car? Oh yes . . . there it is."

Their car was off by itself where a cottonwood tree dropped a shadow black as a hole in the ground. The back curtains were still up.

"Let's sit in here," she suggested, opening the back door as he started to open the front. "There's more room."

Little room they seemed to need though. Two could not have sat on less.

Even so he was still and constrained at first, just as though they had never kissed. With tender contempt she felt him touch her fearfully. And with pride she felt his hands grow bolder as they found her warm and willing.

"O Ruth!" his voice was hoarse with feeling. "I oughtn't to do this . . . You're so good and perfect . . . I oughtn't to touch you. I can't tell you how I feel . . . as though I were tearing a flower to pieces . . . And yet I must. I need you, Ruth!"

He didn't know how to talk, she thought, or make love. He just blurted out his feelings as though he couldn't help it.

His lips found hers and held them, and for a long time they were still. But suddenly he released her, and began to talk.

"Ruth. You know what? I wish I could run away with you right now and marry you . . . Now! Tonight! I feel as though if I could have you now, nothing else would ever matter . . . and no other time could possibly be as good as this!"

A moment before she had been almost one with him, forgetting herself. Now while her body was still in his arms, her mind leaped back, separate, alert, and calculating.

"How could we, Wilbur? I never heard of such a thing!"

"Why couldn't we?" he came back at her earnestly. "There must be some little town we could drive to and find a minister or a justice of the peace, and then catch a train for somewhere."

"Oh, there are places enough we could go. But wouldn't you rather wait . . . think about it a while?"

"Wait? What's the use of waiting? No, I don't want to wait, as far as I'm concerned. I want to go ahead. I never wanted half so much to go ahead with anything—not even my work . . . If only I could be sure we weren't hurting some one else, Ruth . . . Your mother! She's been so kind to me. You have to think of a mother, Ruth. You know mine just died."

His voice was getting shaky with a confusion of emotions.

"If there were only some one—some older person—we could tell. Some one that could explain to her after we were gone so she wouldn't worry, so she would know we had thought of her . . . I'll tell you, Ruth! Let's explain it to Miss Budlong. She's a good sort."

"I don't know, Wilbur."

HER voice was genuinely weak and dubious now. She was suddenly sick with indecision. What good reason, to him, for not telling Alma? And if Alma were a good sport about it, they would really go. And if they didn't tell Alma, he and his conscience would spar for hours—until it was too late. But what would Alma say—Alma, her best friend? How little she knew of her, really! How little she trusted her now!

While she hesitated, he seized the initiative.

"I'll go and find her!" He was opening the door. He was getting out. "I'll be back—it won't take but a minute."

With the aching tension of a gambler she saw him go.

He was back in three minutes.

"Here she is! She was looking for us. They wanted to go home."

Both of them climbed in and sat down, Wilbur between the two women.

Ruth could see Alma's eyes shining in the dim light. Alma smelled excitement.

"Now!" she said. "What is this terribly important matter you two want to ask me about?" Her teeth gleamed encouragement.

"We want to run away and get married . . . Right now . . . Tonight!" Wilbur spoke loud enough to reach a crowd. "We want you to fix it up with Mrs. Bruck, so that she won't feel bad about it."

Alma laughed as one would laugh at the prankish, impossible project of a child.

"I never heard of such a thing," she said. "What in the world do you want to run away for? What are you running away from? If you really want to be married after you get over this moonstruck fit, nobody's going to stop you."

Ruth felt herself go limp in her seat. It was all over, she knew. Alma would talk him out of it. And there wasn't a thing *she* could say—not a thing. That was the worst of it. She must be the modest, frightened, hesitating child. She was in a fight with her hands tied.

"But you don't understand, Miss Budlong. We want to go *now!*" Wilbur's voice was more eloquent than his words. "I'm twenty-one. I've got the right. It's just a question of not hurting any one's feelings."

"Just so," Alma agreed. She was serious and emphatic now. "And of course it *would* hurt Mrs. Bruck's feelings terribly. Think of your own mother, Mr. Fadden. Would you have treated her that way?"

That word, mother, was the club that knocked him.

"Maybe she's right, Ruth," he said feebly. "It wouldn't be fair to her or to your mother, either. And we can get married another time. I guess she's right."

"Yes, I suppose she is." Ruth pushed out the words with difficulty. They were weighted with bitterness and disgust.

Alma's teeth gleamed in triumph.

"Now come on back with me, you two moonstruck infants!" she gloated. "We'll have a few more dances and then go home. And you'll both thank me for saving you from such a prank."

Neither thanked her as they struggled back in the dark.

They entered and stood uneasily near the door just as music was starting, avoiding each other's eyes.

Ruth felt suddenly weary. She felt for the first time like running away.

But she had not long to think of her feelings. Conny Billop was coming across the floor. She had avoided him all evening, but there was no escaping him now.

He was pretty drunk—about as drunk as any one ever got at the Springs without being discreetly led away by friends. He bore down upon her, grinning. She would have liked to refuse him, but she was afraid. Over his shoulder as he guided her away, she saw Wilbur and Alma

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dancing uncomfortably together. Wilbur's face was long and blank. It made her sick to see it.

Conny was talking, his lips almost at her ear.

"Say, Ruth, y'know . . . I've been looking at you all evening. Couldn't keep my eyes off you. And I've been thinking we were a couple of idiots when we had that scrap. You and I, Ruth, we're the same kind. We don't give a damn—that's us! We ought to stick together."

Why was she so popular all of a sudden? Because Wilbur, the wealthy stranger, had taken her up. They all wanted her now because he did. They wanted to keep her in the place they had assigned her, as the town scandal. Something to talk about. In a bitter flash of intuition she felt that for the first time she saw through them all. Even Alma, her best friend—Alma had spoiled her chance!

"We're gonna have a cocktail party out in a car, Ruth, and we want you to come. After this dance. We'll all sneak out to Archie Platt's car. Will you, Ruth? It's gonna be a red hot party!"

How to refuse without making him angry?

"Thanks, Conny. I'd like to but I can't. I've got this next dance."

"Aw, cut it, Ruth! You never used to be such a good little girl. Ruth, you've got to come!"

"I can't, Conny."

THE worst of it was she didn't have the next dance because she had been out so long. Unless some one came to her rescue it would be hard to get away. She saw Romer at the door, smoking a cigaret as he leaned against the lintel, watching the dancers. She caught his eye easily as they passed him, winked and jerked her head ever so slightly toward Conny. Romer nodded and threw away his cigaret. When the music stopped he came up and claimed her.

"This is the one you promised me, Ruth."

"Yes, I know it is."

She smiled at Conny and they walked away. She couldn't resist the temptation to look back once. Conny was still standing there, looking after them, and she could see the slow, muddled resentment of a tipsy man dawning in his face.

"Conny was lit and a little impossible," she told Romer. "Thanks for coming."

They danced in silence. She relaxed and drifted limp in his arms, grateful to him for saying nothing, infinitely relieved to be for a moment with some one she neither had to fight nor to fool. When the music was over they mingled and lost each other in a group on the floor.

Her mind went instantly back to Wilbur. She searched the floor for him with an anxious eye, again and again, made sure he wasn't there . . .

Neither was Conny, nor Walt Gibby, nor Archie Platt, nor Eva . . . Could they have roped him into their party?

The dance was going briskly now. The stags had begun to cut in, and she was as much in demand as any girl on the floor, for she was one of the nimblest. She smiled and laughed and deftly adjusted her step to ever-changing partners. And all the time her eyes were on the door. Every minute that passed without a sight of Wilbur heightened the tension of her anxiety.

When finally she did see him enter, she freed herself with a ruthless "Excuse me," made her way across the floor, dodging dancers, and with some slight pretense brought up before him.

His face was as easy to read as a child's. It was pale, and his mouth worked a little. There was a cut on his lip which bled slightly. His eyes were all confusion and distress and seemed to be looking at nothing—or at least at nothing real.

"Hello!" she called, trying unsuccessfully to sound casual and happy. "This is ours. Let's dance."

When he touched her she knew he was lost. All the tension of eagerness was gone out of his body. His hand and arm were limp.

"Where have you been? And what's the matter?" she demanded. "You look at me so funny. Please don't look at me that way!"

He was silent for a moment, and then:

"O Ruth! I don't know how to tell you. Something has happened that's changed everything—everything we said and planned this evening. I don't feel about you the way I did . . . I want to, but I can't . . . I've got to get away by myself and think."

He was floundering miserably in his confession when Archie Platt cut in on them and took her away. Wilbur released her with evident relief. Over her partner's shoulder she saw him make for the door—he almost ran for it—and disappear.

She danced furiously—for how long she didn't know. She danced with man after man, hardly heeding who her partners were. The first thing she noticed was Alma, signaling to her desperately, with a funny, worried, half-pitying look on her face. As soon as she could get free she went to where Alma was sitting alone. Alma took her hand.

"Listen, dear," she said gently. "Mr. Fadden asked me to tell you that he wasn't feeling well and went home. He took a taxi, I think. He was awfully sorry and confused. It seems rude, but I don't think he meant it to be. He seemed to be in an awful state and you know how bashful he is. He simply didn't want you or any one else to see him that way. I think some of the boys gave him a drink that made him sick, and Doc said he heard he and Conny Billop had a fight . . . What about I'm sure I don't know . . . Anyway, the party was evidently a little too much for him . . . But everything will be all right, I'm sure, and now we'll all go home."

Ruth jerked away her hand. She was suddenly filled with a rage that felt like hot water poured all through her, pricking out against her eyelids in scalding tears.

"*I'm* not going home!" She snapped out her reply and turned away. Alma came running after her.

"You must, Ruth. Your mother'll be worried. And I'm responsible."

She turned, flaming red.

"Nobody's responsible for me! I'm tired of being taken care of . . . You can tell mother I wouldn't come! From this minute on, I'm going to do just what I please, just what I feel like!"

Alma seemed for a moment dumb with amazement. Ruth had never shown Alma her temper before.

People were looking at them curiously. She took advantage of Alma's consternation to flee. Out the door she went, into the dark away from the cars. When she felt completely alone, she covered her face with her hands and sobbed. Her thoughts moved to the bitter spasmodic rhythm of her angry grief.

WHAT a fool she had been! To imagine she could get away with anything—in this town—among her friends! It was all over. That was clear enough.

She didn't speculate much on what had happened because she could imagine it so easily. Wilbur in a group of them, in the dark, talking about her . . . Eva dropping gentle poisonous words in his ears . . . Conny getting him alone, giving him a tip for his own good. Evidently he had resented something Conny said. But all of it had been too much for him . . . She knew just how it had hit him. It had simply smashed the impression she had worked so hard to make. He was such a baby—a big overgrown mama's boy that thought all girls were angels—or else devils . . .

All her bold dreams of the morning seemed to her preposterous now. It made her sick and ashamed to think of them—to think she had been fool enough to believe in them.

When she had done crying she felt suddenly cool and hard and reckless. She wanted to go back to the dance and show everybody she didn't care. She slipped cautiously into the hall and made for the dressing-room.

CHAPTER X

ROMER left the hall and climbed the mountainside precariously in the dark, moved by an impulse to get away from, and above, the hot, bright, seething patch of life in which he had moved for hours.

He was hot and confused with the alcohol in his blood and the crash and scream of jazz still ringing in his ears. After a hard scramble he sat down on a flat rock several hundred feet above the road and lit a cigaret.

The Pavilion was a bit of yellow light, a faint tinkle of music and a spatter of clapping hands far below.

Living, he reflected, was a hot and humiliating business. But to watch life and reflect upon it—that was to sit among gods.

Ruth was a perfect embodiment of this town. She had its blind energy, its unawareness, its painful conflict of impulse and ideal. She was a pagan spirit bound to a Christian destiny . . .

That was why she dominated his imagination, he told himself, trying desperately to climb onto the high horse of his thought. But he could not reduce her to an abstraction. Her red mouth mocked him out of the darkness.

He wanted the girl and he couldn't get her . . . Admit it and go home to a lonely bed. He rose impatiently and threw away his cigaret. He would go

and have one more look at the crowd just to prove to himself that he *could* look and come away comparatively untroubled.

The dance was nearing a lively finish. At first he thought they were all gone—Ruth and her followers—but he presently discovered that she alone was still there. She was dancing with a man he didn't know. As they passed he met her eyes and knew they contained a signal for him . . .

He took her away from her partner and they danced to the tune that had run like a theme through the evening. Three times the dance ended and was renewed. Finally the leader rose and bowed, jerkily, repeatedly . . . He turned and closed the piano.

Ruth and Romer looked at each other and smiled.

"Come on," she said. And they went out together to her car.

"You're not alone, are you?" he inquired.

"Yes. Hop in . . . I'll take you to town."

Across the level prairie she flew, passing other cars with a reckless foot on the gas. She made a rapid and skilful detour which took her into town by a side road. In less than half an hour they brought up before his door.

"Won't you come in" he invited politely, not to be outdone in reserve.

She nodded.

"Yeah . . . But I think I'll park the car around the corner . . . Safety first. You go on up and I'll join you."

He let himself into his two-room flat, at the head of a short flight of steps, sat down in the darkness faintly relieved by beams of an arc-light shining through the window, and lit a cigaret. He observed with a sort of detached interest that his hand trembled. But his consciousness was mostly in his ears, listening for a step on the stairs.

Presently he heard it. She was coming up the stairs two at a time—at first.

The step slowed, it stopped.

There was a long moment when they stood motionless, a wall between them, ten feet apart in darkness and silence. It made him realize how little now he knew her. What inner struggle was going on there, so close to him and yet so wholly mysterious?

She was coming up again, but taking the few remaining steps slowly. She opened the door and came in. He fumbled for her in the dark. His hands found her.

"Shall I make a light?" he asked.

She was silent a moment—then: "Yes, please do," she answered.

They stood regarding each other, suddenly constrained. It struck him that she did not look her chosen part toward him of a sophisticated and rather devilish young thing. She looked simply bewildered—like a child who has lost his way.

He went toward her, put an arm about her. She pushed him away gently.

He stepped back, puzzled, a little irritated.

"What do you want, anyhow?" he asked.

"It doesn't matter," she said. "Because I can't have it."

It was the first word of honest self-revelation she had ever given him, and it suddenly set her before him in a flood of light. What she wanted, he knew now, was that gangling innocent boy who stood to her for all the ideals of her place and kind.

Slowly he digested the painful fact that some one else had touched her imagination as he could never hope to. What had carried her toward him was only a gesture of revolt, a reaction from disappointment. Even if she had given herself he would never have possessed her.

They stood silent for several minutes, realizing that the impulse which had carried them this far lay dead between them. And yet there was no bitterness over its death.

She held out her hand in farewell.

"That was a good dance we had," she said.

Steps again, going down. In the street below a car roared, purred, hummed away.

Late Sunday morning Ruth came outdoors and sat on the stone bench in the garden.

She was glad the family had gone to church and that the house was still and empty. That was about all she felt. She had fallen suddenly from strong emotion into oblivion, like a soldier after battle, and from that nether world of dream and dark, she was only half emerged.

A few people passed, coming home from church, bored and sleepy, thinking of fried chicken and naps in hammocks. She saw them clearly but without interest, lazily noting detail as one will when the mind is vacant.

SHE saw a man coming down the sidewalk hurriedly. At a distance he looked vaguely familiar, but he caught her eye chiefly because his quick, nervous movement seemed alien to the somnolent quality of Sunday morning. Not until he was within a hundred feet of the house did she recognize him with dull amazement as Wilbur Fadden.

For he seemed to have changed greatly overnight. His face was pale and haggard and drawn in a way that made him look older, than she had ever seen him before.

He came straight toward her. Unsmiling and resolute he approached her, holding out his hand. She took it automatically, open-mouthed.

He seemed to come to her out of a remote past, so much emotion had rolled across her consciousness since that last dance of theirs. She felt herself a different person now and he looked a different one. He sat down beside her on the bench, holding onto her hand with a nervous grip which almost hurt.

"Oh Ruth! Can you forgive me for the way I acted last night? I don't know how to tell you—I kind of lost my head. I think I lived more yesterday than in any year of my life before, and I got all mixed up about everything . . . When I left you I couldn't sleep. I didn't even go to bed. I walked around all night thinking things out . . . Ruth I need you! And I don't believe a word any one says about you . . . Ruth, I know you're good!"

THE END

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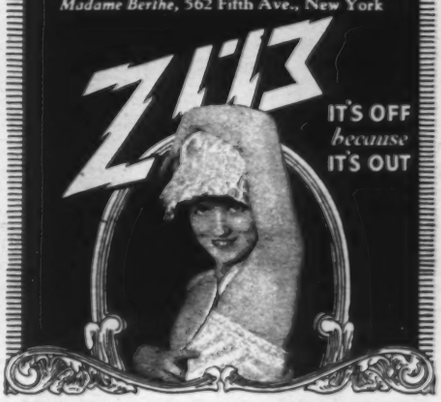

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proportioned and perfectly artificial. A thick braid of dark hair bound the small head like a crown.

Sheridan's nerves experienced a keen shock of interest.

"Who in the name of——" Sheridan whispered over his shoulder to Carol.

"But you said you knew her, Dan——"

And at the same instant, a deep and tender voice, stirring as the voice of a cello, came from between the painted lips of the stranger.

"You don't remember me, Captain Sheridan," it said mockingly. "I'm little Yvette Duer."

There was in her speech a trace of something foreign, a very faint blurring of the syllables. Sheridan bent toward her with a polite phrase on the tip of his tongue, but as he was about to speak Yvette Duer opened her eyes wide, and for the second time that evening Sheridan's nerves tingled with shock.

For those eyes seemed the eyes of another; they did not belong to the face, and when they were opened the very features seemed transformed. In a moment the sophisticated woman vanished, drowned in the limpid innocence of a child's eyes.

Sheridan found himself stammering, probably for the first time. Immediately Miss Duer lowered her long lashes, and sagged more deeply into the chair.

"Sit down, Captain, and let your military mind help us rebuild this sorry world," she commanded, whereupon she cast upon Sheridan a glance of such unmistakable provocation, that, seating himself next to her, he marveled at that fleeting impression of innocence.

SITTING on the floor with Carol Tremaine on one side of him and Yvette Duer on the other, Sheridan asked abruptly:

"Why in the devil do we, as a group, call ourselves unconventional?"

"That's easy," Carol Tremaine answered. "We aren't wealthy enough to be anything else."

"That's quibbling," interrupted a rosy young man who wrote plays which nobody read. "This is an unconventional generation, because it's rebellious."

"Poppycock," grumbled Sheridan under his breath.

"Nothing of the sort," contradicted the playwright. "Look at the women, Sherry, they've done it. They've spoiled themselves for the old-fashioned man, and spoiled the old-fashioned girl for us. They've stopped giving and started taking."

"That's a woman's argument," Sheridan came back with a grin. "Easy to see you've just been married. Now I think women have stopped taking and started giving, only they don't realize it yet. What advantage do they gain by turning their noses up and our support down?"

"Oh, come now, Sherry old dear," Carol exclaimed, cuddling close to him. "There's something in being taken as human beings, instead of just females, Dan."

"Yes, but do you want that? Think about it well, my child. You turn down domestic drudgery and take up economic drudgery, or else you refuse to be slaves to convention and become slaves to passion."

"Rather sweeping alternatives. Still, whatever we do, we get the respect due to human beings, to equals. We don't want your nasty old chivalry; we're not weak; we can look after ourselves."

"Yes! by falling back on your femininity when you get into jams. That's what makes me so ripping mad. You want the odds coming and going. It's equal to equal when the straw swings your way, and strong against weak when it doesn't."

Carol giggled at his intensity, and Sheridan, turning to Yvette Duer, said softly: "You aren't a modern woman, are you, Miss Duer?"

He was astonished at the sudden expression of anger which passed over the girl's face.

"Modern, yes! I am truly modern, I hope. I take—and pay. If I demand the reward of a man, I can also take the punishment of one."

"Such as a sock in the jaw, for example?"

Yvette's laugh rang out.

"Why not, Sir Soldier? It is but a chance among the rest. And then you are making a popular mistake. You think the modern woman must be masculine, that is evident."

"I think she adopts the masculine viewpoint; also that she doesn't live up to it."

"And I tell you that is absurd, absurd to a degree. Am I masculine?"

Sheridan's throat contracted sharply as he looked the answer to her question.

"Yet I am the epitome of that of which you speak," Yvette continued. "What you, here, call one hundred per cent of woman is the equal of any one hundred per cent of man."

"And I say that is impossible! Actually, physically impossible!"

"Then I am the first truly modern woman you have ever met. I am not afraid of you, nor am I afraid of any living man. I take and I pay. And I have never been in love."

"Is that a challenge, Miss Duer?" Dan Sheridan asked.

Yvette leaned over until her face was almost against his.

"Why not?" she whispered.

"Should you like to fall in love?" Sheridan returned, for Yvette alone to hear.

"It would be a new experience," she said lightly. "So, Sir Soldier, if you will play my game I will promise to keep the rules, equal to equal, no quarter taken—or given."

"I will play your game, Yvette Duer," Sheridan said unsmilingly. "But mind that you do not forget the rules you have made. I have been a gambler for many years, and I do not think I have ever shown mercy to a cheat."

There was a pause, and Sheridan, rather to his astonishment, noticed that Yvette's hand was trembling. He put his own suddenly over hers, and heard her catch her breath with a sharp gasp.

"And you, Captain," Yvette said, "are you quite sure on your side? You have no prejudice against falling in love with a modern woman?"

"I have done it before, without regrets," Sheridan replied.

"Oh," murmured Yvette, "it is then as I have thought—you do not exalt virtue?"

"If exalting virtue is avoiding it, then my exaltation is complete. A virtuous woman fills me with virtuous terror. In short, Miss Duer, my behavior is quite as proper in effect as that of any Galahad." Her answer was a nod of satisfaction.

"You know Pierre Louÿs' 'Chansons de Bilitis'?" Sheridan asked.

"We were not allowed to read such books in the convent," Yvette replied.

Sheridan regarded her fixedly. "In that case I assume that your wisdom doesn't come from literature."

"No, from observation . . . and from experience, Captain."

With this sentence, gravely spoken, Yvette turned away from his.

A few minutes later Sheridan moved to the dancing angle, where, for the balance of the evening, he worked off excess emotion on Sandy Tremaine's drum.

THE house which Miss Duer had left her niece was an immense barn of a place near Gramercy Park. As Yvette hurried up the stairs on her return from the Tremaines, she was distressed by the echo of her own footsteps in the impenetrable silence.

The room in which she slept was large, and even the twelve ornate ormolu fixtures could not lighten the gloom of the paneled walls or the heavy oak four-poster with its canopy of crimson damask.

With a sigh of weariness she sat down in the chair which faced her late aunt's marble-topped dressing-table, and turned on the two cruel and unshaded toilet lamps.

From the mirror her own face stared at her impudently, a face that even in that harsh glare was unlined as a fresh peach, a face young but wise, bitter, and curious.

Yvette studied it with a smile that was half cynical, half sad. "You liked that face, Captain Daniel Sheridan," she observed to the image. The sound of her voice sharpened her feeling of solitude, and Yvette shivered.

"I shouldn't do what I am going to do. It's wrong . . . wickedly wrong," she went on to herself. And then, tossing back her head with its braided black coronet: "But I must . . . I must and will," she added.

Then, abruptly, she switched off the lights and knelt. Pressing her hands together in a gesture of supplication, she whispered: "Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

DURING the fortnight that followed Yvette and Dan Sheridan met often, at teas, at dinners, and at the theater. But they were rarely alone for more than a few moments, and the conversation that had taken place at the Tremaine's

party that first night had no sequel.

Yvette's illusiveness intrigued Sheridan more and more. It dawned upon him, angrily, that she was playing her game, and playing it cleverly. If her evasion was a trick to whet his desire it was successful, certainly; but it was, as Captain Sheridan knew, a trick that one could play as well as another.

Abruptly Sheridan ceased to attend the functions to which Yvette was invited. Miss Duer continued attending functions of all sorts, and for another fortnight she did not have any communication with the captain.

Then, one rainy November afternoon when he was returning from a long walk, Sheridan ran into her.

"My good Daniel," she exclaimed when she saw him, "I thought you had been away. Where have you been keeping yourself?"

"I've been working," he said rather gruffly, astonished at the sudden pounding of his heart.

"I am half frozen," she returned, as though he had not spoken. "I wish you would take me somewhere and get me a cup of tea."

Now during that afternoon two incidents occurred which resulted in a singular conversation between them. In the first place it happened that as they turned into Fourth Street, where there was a tea-room which served something more warming than tea, they came upon the not too unusual sight of a man maltreating a small brown dog.

It seemed to Yvette that what occurred happened with a speed which illustrated the statement that the hand is quicker than the eye. There was Sheridan's tall figure lunging forward—Yvette swore that his mustache bristled—and then there was a splash. And after that there was a small brown dog running madly around the corner with its tail between its legs.

"And here we are," Sheridan said, guiding Yvette down a flight of uneven stone steps, without another glance at the huddled form in the gutter. "Go in and sit down, I'll join you in a minute." With which, pressing a handkerchief against his right knuckles, he disappeared.

The second incident followed immediately.

Yvette, after carefully refurbishing her make-up before a cracked mirror, entered the low, white-washed basement of the restaurant.

There were several men in the room who had been celebrating some unknown event with large quantities of gin. And the eyes of these half-drunken men found the picture Yvette made very pleasing indeed. No sooner was she seated than a short, stocky chap lurched over and, taking the chair at Yvette's side, asked what she'd have.

"I would have you return to your own table," Yvette said quite distinctly.

The man asked whether Yvette would go with him, at which there was a chorus of laughter from the other end of the room. Yvette, somewhat frightened, answered stiffly that she would not. The man, who must have been very drunk indeed, then made some remarks about girls with faces painted like Yvette's not high-hatting him, and seized her hand.

It was at that point that Sheridan reappeared. Yvette, with an agreeable sensation in her chest, waited for a repetition of the earlier tableau. But Sheridan merely grinned amiably at the drunken stranger, observing: "You're in my seat, brother."

Again there was a chorus of laughter, and the stranger, with a broad wink at Sheridan and a thick remark about "splaining everything to his 'plete sassfaction," took himself off.

Yvette's eyes blazed.

"Why have you more chivalry for a dog than for me?" she asked angrily.

Sheridan looked at her composedly.

"Since when have you wanted chivalry?" he returned. "Are not women the equals of men in every respect, and as able to take care of themselves?"

"Would you not fight for a friend—a man who was your friend—if he chanced to be in difficulties?" Yvette demanded.

"I would under some conditions. If a man came to me squarely, told me his difficulties, and asked for help, I couldn't decently refuse."

"And a woman? Why wouldn't you do the same thing for her?"

"I suppose I would," Sheridan said.

"If I asked you for help could I count on you?"

"Supposing you don't take your fences until you come to them."

"Very well," Yvette responded with a sigh. "But I may come to them soon, and if that happens I will remember what you have said."

A rather constrained silence fell between them. It lasted till just before they left, when Yvette put her hand over Sheridan's and murmured: "You have neglected me of late, my friend. Will you be kinder in the future?"

Sheridan made no answer.

"I am busy tonight, but will you telephone tomorrow?"

"No," answered Sheridan explosively. "When you are bored with all these parties and people, then perhaps——"

At the door of the Duer house Yvette again asked Sheridan to call her. But he did not telephone the next day, or the day after, or the day after that.

SHERIDAN would not have admitted for the world that he was in love with Yvette Duer. But, sitting as he had months before alone in front of a crackling fire, it was of Yvette that Sheridan dreamed.

Yvette free and unafraid. Yvette, beautiful and strange. Yvette, whose small red mouth seemed to hold, and to withhold, the secrets of a thousand curious kisses . . . learned where? and from whom? Yvette, from whose eyes there looked out the alien soul of a child whom experience had not yet robbed of innocence and wonder.

Somewhere a clock struck one.

Sheridan knocked the ashes out of his pipe, got up, stretched, and paused in astonishment. There was a knocking at the door.

His heart leaped to a wild hope, which he thrust impatiently back. His long legs carried him swiftly to the door, and leaning his shoulder against it he called: "Who's there?"

"It is I, Yvette."

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He fingered his mustache for a moment, grasping at his shaken composure. Then he jerked the door open.

She stood there, against the darkness of the hall, like a princess come to life out of some fantastic oriental tale. Her cloak of black fox fur was blurred in the dusk, and against it her body, sheathed in a tunic of shimmering cloth, stood out in perfect relief.

Before he could help her she had thrown off the fur cloak, and, walking across the room, she took a cigaret out of a crumpled package.

He approached with a lighted match, and looking at him sidewise, she said: "You wouldn't come to me, so I have come to you."

His hand touched hers. With a rapid movement full of indescribable coquetry she drew back, adding: "For help, as man to man."

"Indeed?" He lighted a cigaret for himself, noting that his hand was not as steady as it should have been.

"I have come to ask you a favor," pursued Yvette; "a really tremendous favor, and one I would not dare to beg if it were not for—but—shall I proceed?"

"Certainly. Make yourself at home."

"I shall then." And with the words Yvette flung herself face down on the couch, crossed her legs, and rested her chin on her clasped hands. She was sharply conscious of the fact that she had never looked more alluring; conscious of the fact that Sheridan was stirred.

She spoke without looking at him again:

"Have you ever thought of marriage?"

Sheridan shrugged. "Sometimes—casually, Miss Duer."

"And—and me? Do you find me attractive, Captain?"

"Is this a necessary part of your game?" he asked coldly.

"Yes, it is. I must know whether you find me repulsive."

"No one could find you repulsive," Sheridan answered impatiently. "And I like you very much."

"Enough to marry me, Captain Sheridan?"

"This is so sudden, Miss Duer," mocked Sheridan when he had regained command over his scattered wits.

"Don't make a joke of it," she responded sharply. "I am in deadly earnest. I am asking an insane favor of you. I wish you to marry me, to give me your name. Afterwards—I will leave you or stay with you, as you please. And I will give you your freedom in a year. If you will consent to this, and ask no questions."

"Ask no questions, eh? That's cool enough—decidedly."

Sheridan glanced at Yvette, but she had turned away her face, and a growing conviction silenced him for an instant. "There are some things," he said at length, "that I should be amused to know. One is—why did you come to me?"

"Because you are hard, and fair, I think," she answered, evenly. "And because you are a gambler, and I thought you might gamble with this."

Sheridan felt the blood burning his temples. "And if, at the end of a year, instead of wishing to set you free I should want to—keep you, what then?"

"If you marry me, as I wish, Captain, I will be at your disposal. A month ago I told you something that I meant sincerely. I take—and I pay. You may exact your own price."

Something in her tone angered Sheridan unendurably.

"In any case," he said with brutal directness, "I don't think you'll have to worry about the future. I'll let you off at a low rate."

"You mean you will accept?"

Sheridan nodded.

"I do not know how to thank you. I—" She paused. Then: "Why are you doing this?" she asked, curiously. "You aren't in love with me?"

Quite suddenly he went to Yvette, drew her to her feet, and stood holding her wrists. She was passive, with bent head drooping. It seemed to Sheridan that words were drawn from him as if by an invisible magnet; he could hardly believe them to be his own.

"I think you will be able to teach me things . . . about love . . . which I have not even dreamed, Yvette," he said, staring down at her crown of dark hair. "And when you teach me, Yvette . . . you shall tell me how it was that you, who are so young, became so wise."

A slight shudder shook her still body, and as if it brought him to himself Sheridan concluded in a voice of forced indifference: "I will take you home now. You may set the date of our wedding." And he let go of her wrists abruptly.

She touched his arm, gently. "Dan Sheridan," she whispered, "why do you act as though you hated me? You are not . . . jealous?"

"Jealous? Why the deuce should I be?" he laughed.

"I meant . . . of the past, Dan."

He took a deep breath, and with it his objective attitude returned. With something of his usual sang-froid, he observed: "You are mad, my child, quite mad. I have already assured you that virtue bores me. And in any case this is not a love match, but a marriage of convenience."

"I am afraid," said Yvette, and smiled a trifle wearily, "that it is a marriage of inconvenience."

Then in silence she allowed him to place the black fur cloak about her shoulders.

AS THE date of his marriage with Yvette approached, Sheridan found himself wondering more and more often whether it was not he who was mad.

Again and again he asked himself what diabolical impulse had urged him to accept so ludicrous a proposition, and again and again he attempted to evade the inevitable answer—that he was thoroughly in love with his future wife. Of all possibilities, the most humiliating to admit was that Yvette, recognizing his love, was using him as a pawn in her game.

Against the admission of jealousy, also, he fought with bitter ferocity. For so long had he denied any interest in virtue that it was unendurable to have questions about Yvette's mysterious past gnaw at his mind like rats.

Day by day the strain between them increased, until Sheridan felt that indeed he was closer to hating than loving. And

so at length their wedding day arrived. She had decided against a wedding trip, and after the ceremony she and Sheridan slipped quietly out and into a taxi.

As Sheridan slammed the door Yvette turned to him, saying nervously:

"I—I want to thank you. You've done a tremendous thing. Don't you——" she hesitated, concluding with a little gasp, "don't you think it might be better if I went to—to my house?"

Sheridan stared at her, first in amazement, then in rising anger.

"No, I'm damned if I do," he brought out at last. "You're my wife."

"But as you yourself remarked," Yvette said faintly, "it was not a—a love match."

"You called it a marriage of inconvenience," snapped Sheridan. "However, I don't propose to have all the inconvenience on my side."

Not another word was spoken until they reached Sheridan's flat.

Yvette ascended the stairs, and while Sheridan payed off the driver opened the door and entered her new home.

Slowly she divested herself of hat and coat, and going to a window stood between the drawn orange curtains looking down at the street. A few flakes of dry snow were falling. The wind, whistling softly but dismally, whirled them in a mad dance against the window pane. Yvette, shivering, heard Sheridan's footsteps behind her.

"Well, Yvette?" he said.

She turned away from the window, and stood facing him. Sheridan was aware of an acute, stabbing unhappiness. She was so beautiful . . . so white, so perfect, so—the word that had first occurred to him came back now—so decadent.

Savagely he thrust back the depression that was descending upon him and abruptly strode toward her. She stood very still, her back against the orange draperies, her hands clasped over her breast.

He moved her hands with his left one, and with a fumbling gesture unfastened a ruby clasp at her neck. Her throat fascinated him, it was so perfectly white and smooth with a tiny pulse throbbing visibly. He laid his hand on her throat, noticing as if hypnotized the pallor of the long white triangles which showed between his fingers. His fingers, brown and thin, were like tight wires webbing the petal of a magnolia blossom. Yvette's throat—the throat of a woman who called herself the equal of any man—who had proved herself his superior! And yet—and yet the slightest pressure——

He noticed, with astonishment, that the color of the flesh was changing. Slowly, definitely, under his touch the whiteness deepened to faint pink, to deeper pink, to a dark warm flush. Quite suddenly he looked at Yvette's face.

She was blushing.

SHERIDAN drew back his hand as though her flesh had burned him, and cried: "Yvette!"

And Yvette, her shoulders shaking unexpectedly, put her fingers over her eyes and began to sob brokenly, terribly.

"Am I as dreadful as that?" Sheridan asked.

She lifted her face, wet with tears and contorted with a curious, infantile grimace. "You don't understand," she wailed.

"I'm afraid I don't," he answered evenly.

"But I love you, I love you. I've loved you so long," she sobbed. "And I can't go through with this. I thought I could—I wanted to play the game through to the end, but after all I'm only—only a cheat."

Sheridan drew her gently down beside him on the couch.

"It's so terrible," she went on, brokenly, "to have married you this way—pretending. And now you'll find out, and you'll send me away——"

"I think I know," said Sheridan, "and I won't drive you away, my own Yvette, because, after all, I care very much."

"You know?" she cried. "You've guessed, then?"

He held her hand tightly.

"You need my name to cloak a—disgrace, Yvette?" he asked.

She tore her hand away, and standing up with her head flung back almost screamed: "No! No! No!" Then she began to laugh, painfully. "I thought you wouldn't have guessed," she gasped. "I acted my part so well—so dreadfully well. It's worse than that.

"Worse?" Sheridan's voice was blank.

"Yes," replied Yvette, more quietly. "I'm all that you despise most, Dan. For I am—so quite, quite virtuous, really. No man has even kissed me—ever——"

Sheridan found himself at her side, gripping her arms.

"Go on," he said. "Don't stop there."

"Oh it's very simple, really. You know I was brought up in a convent—a French convent. I wasn't taught to be a modern girl, only to be good—to be chaste and reserved and dutiful. And then, five years ago—will you even remember, I wonder—I came back here to visit my aunt. She had such sophisticated friends, I was quite lost. I was shocked, horrified.

"And when I saw you, Dan. You came to my aunt's house; and like the rest you looked at me and ran away because I was old-fashioned and drab. Oh, I listened to every word you said so that I learned what you thought of virtue—

"You used to come to me in my dreams, Dan. And at last you made me quite forget all the sisters' teachings—everything except that when I came back I must appear to be the sort of woman you wanted. I didn't know then—how hard it would be."

Yvette drew herself up with an effort.

"Now you know what I am," she said.

"I have only one thing to say," Sheridan answered.

"And it is?"

Sheridan lifted her hands and pressed them to his heart.

"It is that I am glad, my own. So very glad."

And then he said: "May I have the honor, Yvette, to be the first one to touch your lips?"

Again the soft color flushed her throat, cheeks, and forehead. But this time her trembling lips smiled, shyly . . .

So Sheridan put his mouth against hers, and they stood in silence, trembling, both of them, but quite happy.

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